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On Active Service Series.

SOME SOLDIERS AND LITTLE MAMMA

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SOME SOLDIERS AND LITTLE MAMMA

BY HELEN BOULNOIS

LONDON: JOHN LANE, THE BODLEY HEAD
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M I. Apr. 23/29

TO

MY SAVIOURS AND
PLAYFELLOWS
THE SOLDIERS IN FRANCE

Please, boys, take this souvenir with lots of love
from Mamma.

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SOME SOLDIERS AND LITTLE MAMMA

June 1st, 1917.

DEAR,

The best has happened. I am here again in France. Left London on Sunday afternoon. Luggage was easy. My ticket bought already, the station empty. A cheery V.A.D. and a young officer already in my carriage. His wife had come to see him off, and rejoiced not greatly when he elected to chaperon the girl.

They spoke of his censoring letters.

"And he says it's so tiresome reading all the drivel the girls write," the wife remarked.

But the young thing kept up her end.

"It's jolly difficult to write at all when you know every word will be read, and probably know the man who will read it."

She seemed light-hearted and is working hard. Told us how she cut up two sheep one day.

"It's frightfully hard work sawing through the bones," she said.

The young couple had spent their ten days in town and been to eleven theatres.

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The country was entrancing. Never have I seen it so exquisite. The delayed spring has brought out everything with a sudden lovely burst. All trees and flowering shrubs are at their most supreme. The lambs plump and white and woolly, and the grass green, but green!

Passing through Folkestone, we saw a torn roof and windows and walls demolished where a bomb had dropped two nights earlier.

We ran on the quay. Very easy work passing the Passport Officer. No bayonets. Soon on board. The top deck plentifully sprinkled with officers. A crowd of soldiers forward. A general from the deck told them to put on their life-belts.

A sailor brought one to me.

"Will it keep me up?" I asked, as he fastened it.

"Keep you up, miss? Yes," he said. "Keep you up after you are dead."

The men were cheery. One pretended to cry, and boohooed loudly with his knuckles in his eyes. Others tendered pretty rough consolation. Another called out 'bus cries, and then walked round saying:

"Who's got a return ticket?" That made me "grue."

We started. They lifted their caps to the white cliffs and held them aloft.

Three iron-clads escorted us. We followed in the white wake of the first. The wash gave the men an opportunity of pretending to be ill. A destroyer

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on either side of us was cutting up the water. It was intensely exhilarating.

Down below to devour pie; though two French officers warned me against eating, lest we should have to take to the water and get a congestion, probably fatal.

Up again, walking along the deck between the men.

"'Ere's a bit of home. 'Ere's a skirt!"

They started singing: "There's a long, long trail a-winding."

And nearer and nearer grew the clear, crisp coast of France. Beneath the high, dark walls of the wooden quay, soldiers above greeted us with cheers, the men on the deck responded.

Walking through them, I offered my hand. They all looked smiling, but—they did give it grips.

Mr. B. of the Society came to find me. Passport business was perfectly simple. As we left the ship the men were singing something to the tune of "The Church's One Foundation."

Walked over the cobble-stones to the little Hôtel du Nord. Some trouble about my room; but one found at last on the top floor.

I chose the cleanest of the two beds, under the window. The door had no lock nor bolt. So when bedtime came I barricaded it with small table and bag.

"Pas nécessaire!" said the little maid.

Well I did. At twelve o'clock British soldiers

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were billeted in the rooms around. Three times my door was violently shaken and nearly burst open. They thought it occupied by other soldiers and that it was side to lock it.

I roused myself and called:

"Mais que voulez-vous? Qu'est-ce que c'est que ça?"

Whispering and shuffling, off they went like children. I could hear every sound and movement in the next room, exactly as if they were in mine.

"Do you know I've come in?" a man said.

Apparently there was little space for him.

"We know you have," a voice answered grimly.

Next morning was warm. Uniform that had seemed amusing in London suddenly became unbearable.

A Red Cross Sister tore my heavy coat off me, saying all that was necessary was that I should *not* wear it. She pinned my badge on my arm, and much relieved, I sauntered down to the *plage*.

A bunch of Blue Boys were seated behind the Casino railings. A couple of young nurses ran down for a dip in the sea. A stray man put a chair for me in front of the railings, and I told the men stories from the wild and woolly West.

Dear, I am getting sleepy. Are you sleepy? Would you like to be in France? Perhaps you are in France!

Yours ever and always,

N.

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ON ACTIVE SERVICE,
A.P.O. X.,
B.E.F.,
FRANCE.

BEST OF MEN,

Well, I left off, sitting on a rickety chair talking to Blue Boys through railings. Went back to the hotel for *déjeuner*, had a chat with Madame, who was taking the quiet but certain position of the Frenchwoman in her own centre.

"Woman is there to guide man," she said. "*Elle le domine* with her sense of morality, which is superior to his."

No trouble again at the station. Porters to be found quite easily. In France soldiers are almost the only passengers, going to and fro *en perme*. Train-loads of troops pass constantly. The French quiet. The British sticking out all over the train, singing. Chains of trucks go by laden with cannon *en camouflage*, wine-barrels, full of *pinard* * for the French troops, cases of Libby, munitions. Sometimes a car taken from the Germans. Red Cross sisters, soft and feminine in white dresses, climb in and out of carriages, rattling money-boxes, or passing into the waiting-room, turned into hospital, where a thin stream of wounded trickles in for fresh dressings. Porters are almost impossible to find. Sentries guard the exits to inspect Permits, Safe-conducts and Passports.

* French soldiers' slang for wine.

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Into the train and a pleasant dawdle through the fields and undulating plains of France. Two Belgian officers were in the carriage. The younger one very good-looking, and his people, mercifully, comparatively safe in Brussels.

As you know, I am accustomed to arriving all over the world alone and generally enjoy it. But I never felt so badly as arriving at that dear little French town, near the home of my ancestors, all that I love most. The matter is, dear, I am not alone. I have given myself over to a Society; and it is just awful to feel you have given yourself over to some one else.

The British Red-cap helped me at the station. The passport man had disappeared before my luggage was found. And the policeman set me on the road to report at the Society's office.

Over the bridges up the flagged streets, and great relief to find a boy, frantically busy, not at all bossy, although the boss.

He advised me to go to the Grand Hotel in a sort of central place, facing the Public Gardens. But the dirt! But the squalor! And the crossness of the woman keeping it. Can this be France? "*Pas de personnel*" is the constant cry.

I was shown to a room I hated. Do you have a violent liking and disliking of rooms? I hate and love them like people. Hard, high window looking on a black wall. And little sleep again at night. For nearly two hours an officer, shut out, rang the

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front-door bell, his finger on the button. Finally he smashed the glass of the front door—he could not let himself in even then—and bellowed.

I wondered as I heard his voice—knowing nothing of the smashed door till morning—if it were a call of firemen for air-raid trouble; but was reassured by hearing Madame scolding with all her might.

Speaking of the noise and my false conclusion next day to Jeanne the housemaid, she said, much as a country-bred woman might ask a townswoman if she were frightened of cows:

"Ah, mademoiselle, and you are afraid of Zeppelins?"

Went round the town this morning as soon as I was up, to see if I could find a cleaner place. A nice old Belgian refugee offered me a spotless room and breakfast for five francs a night. But very cramped. On to a *pension* with a charming old courtyard, white-flagged, creepers hanging off the wall—the relief of finding France still clean—but every room taken. The woman there recommended me to try a neighbour. "A lady alone, big garden, rich, pious, without children."

But a look at the house was enough. I left the pious one alone, and came back to this hotel to climb the stairs with Madame and choose a room on the third floor. It is invitingly placed for raids, being just under a prominent tower. A stone balcony, three big windows, all with different views and each a picture. The middle one overlooks big, pale, green

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trees in the Gardens. To the right, picturesque red roof tops, and to the left—best perhaps of all—the wide place below leading to the picturesque narrow street, crowned by the beautiful tower and *cloche* of the old *Musée*. A joy to see. And each time that it fills me with delight, I praise God the Boches have not got it.

The room is perfectly round.

Madame gave a sharp exclamation. I turned from the window to find her blowing out a dirty little candle-end, burning away on the washstand. Madame was furious.

"Ah!" she cried. "The stupid thing! The housemaid! Always burning candles for her husband at the Front!"

Poor Jeanne!

She is looking after me with that mother-heart of France. They are refugees from Lille. Ten of them escaped—but only four survive. Her father and mother died of the hardships. Her sister's husband is killed, a brother and two cousins.

But the dirt——

The milk I had last night—and drank—this morning shows in the glass a quarter of an inch of pure mud. No wonder I woke with sore throat and swelled face.

Am resting and waiting to see the young boss. Am to have tea with him at the other hotel.

Tea is over; and young B——, whom I want to mother, says I've come in the nick of time to help

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with platform work. A chaplain was there. He has just been up to the Front Lines for three days to his son, seriously wounded. Says the shelling was awful. Windows shattered and doors burst open. Pretty nerve-racking for a spectator.

More another time,

Yours,

N.

Some days later.

DEAR,

The best is happening and is going to happen more! I have been to my first Camp and had an evening with the boys.

It was some business getting there. Tram and walking. But awfully interesting on foot through the Camp. Neat little wooden shacks, small gardens in front of them. The English make gardens wherever they go. Fields of tents. Sentries at the corners, grinning peacefully at me under bayonets that look too bulky to hurt. They tell me if they stick them in you they don't come out again.

And by their side a kind of monkey-puzzle cage of barbed wire, surrounding a tent, where misdemeanants are confined. I wave to them—both sentries and misdemeanants, and they smile back at me.

Our Hut is on the far confines of the Camp, facing a little wood.

I couldn't find the door, but a soldier waved me

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round and on the other side I found a wooden veranda, facing a vegetable patch. Men sitting at tables, writing letters out of doors.

But they welcomed me!

Women are scarce, they thronged into the Hut and round about me.

I hit the piano. One of my best stunts is playing so badly that, if any one can, they want to do it instead.

Some one volunteered and they were soon singing away as if there were not a care in the world.

I brought up bones, castanets, tambourine, and a couple of penny whistles that cost seven and sixpence each.

The band sits round the table by the piano and I have the fun of my life conducting. From time to time I stand on a form and recite. They like it best when they join in. A Scotch reel, where they shout the "Hochs!" and "Little Orphan Annie" where we do the wind four times, and have it whistling and howling till I'm afraid the elements will take it up.

We made such a noise that the Hut manager came down to help me. A kind of beautiful gentlemanliness pours from him. He is a pale little man, drops of perspiration, from hard work behind the counter, stand on his high brow. As he walks through the Hut his presence is felt by every man.

There are only rough tables and benches. But it is a place to sit down—a wooden floor to the feet, a sense of walls, and roof overhead.

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You must live weeks, months, years in a tent to know what that means.

He came down the room and said in a gentle, husky voice, a sort of whisper they all lean forward to hear:

"You have a lady, boys, among you this evening. You must take care of her."

They clapped.

"Did you hear how they clapped you?" he asked later, as he was seeing me away.

"They did clap," I replied. "But it was not me —it was you."

An Irishman helps him. A man who can sing a good song himself.

He has left a fine hotel of which he is proprietor, to come and do his bit among the boys.

A rare happy evening, moving among them, sitting on a form with these and hearing a scrap of story from those. To the piano to start new songs, standing on a form to address them, and generally infusing that atmosphere which made the men at Marseilles say: "If you're here, ma'am, it's a party."

And you cannot think how I love it. Some boy looks up and we catch each other's eyes and smile as if we had a hidden secret. We really are all one in the lovely big Nursery feel.

"The game is, 'I'm Little Mamma and you are the children.'"

"And it needs some beating," a man as old as myself exclaimed.

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Last of all I climb on the form, tell them all to hush, for we are going to think of the loved ones at home together.

I told them of their friend, Richard. He is a little boy over in Virginia. Not a very strong little boy either, but a great spirit.

One evening his mother said:

"Time to go to bed, Richard."

He was sitting on a sofa, tugging a crochet hook in and out of a woolly muffler.

"I don't want to go to bed," he said. "I want to ask about the soldiers. You are the friend of the soldiers, aren't you?" he asked me.

"Friend of some of them, Richard," I replied, going to the sofa and sitting beside him.

"Then tell me something I can do for them."

"But you are doing a lot for them, Richard," I said, picking up the end of the muffler, and looking at the tired little boy. "See this beautiful comforter." It had some knots in it and tiresome little mistakes, but it was big and warm.

"But I want to do more," he said.

"Richard, dear, you can't do more," his mother said. "At least to-night. It is bed-time now."

His black nurse stood at the door waiting for him.

"Richard," I said with sudden inspiration, taking his little hand, "there is something you can do. You talk to the Good Shepherd, don't you, when you go to bed at night? You ask Him to take care of you?"

Richard nodded.

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"Will you ask Him to take care of the soldiers too? He does, you know, Richard; but He would like you to talk with Him about them, because His heart is sore for their griefs, and you know He loves the children best of all. He said 'Suffer them to come to Me,' when the stupid old grown-ups wanted to drive them away. You know, some of them have no time to pray. And some of them have gone through such horrid, hard places, they don't think it any use to pray. Will you speak to Him, Richard, for the soldiers?"

He never said a word. He folded up the comforter and climbed down to the floor. He took my hand for good night. But he did it with such decision, we knew what he was thinking, and none of us spoke as he went away upstairs.

That was more than two years ago. He was five then. Last winter I saw his mother again.

"I have a message from Richard," she said. "'Tell her I have never forgotten to pray for the soldiers who haven't time to pray for themselves.' It is true," she added. "He never forgets. When he began he was so little he said his prayers out loud and I heard him. But now he is seven and says them to himself."

When I told the soldiers of little Richard their eyes fixed into mine. But sometimes a head suddenly went down.

If it were for the handclasps alone, life would be happy now.

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Bye-bye, beloved. Can you doubt the love of God when He plants it in the heart of little Richard?

Ever yours,

N.

The blessed boys are all sleeping on the ground, and it is raining.

On a Sand-bank by a Lagoon.

Sitting in the long grass. Beautiful air blowing off the sea. Arriving here has been hard. Dirt and general depression, and then to find Camps just outside and the men thirsty for Sing-Songs and no means of conveyance.

A blue-coated French soldier has left off paddling and come to show me a letter, the only one the Boches have allowed him to receive after thirty months' separation from his wife and family. They are in the invaded country. Happily the news is good. All are well—the little girl was wounded in the knee, but has recovered. His boy is not mentioned.

Another soldier has joined us. He pulls up a kind of reed in the ground, and it has an onion at the end and he eats it. I ask my first friend if they are good and he says:

"He will eat anything. He eats all the time."

But I've pulled one up and am eating too. It is good. I too shall be eating all the time.

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They say you should eat a lot if you don't sleep, and I don't get much sleep.

The third night I was sleeping soundly in my new room, when awakened by what I thought was a Naval Battle. It was hideous to hear the guns crashing past each other.

I lay for some minutes, then wondered if there were anything to see and went on the balcony.

Bombs were travelling like huge stars. They seemed to die away like fireworks before actually falling.

An air-raid.

I had no sense of fear—only a sense of disgust at the hideous noise and the unnecessary damage of it all.

Wondered if an Englishwoman in the next room was frightened, and tried to make the door—no easy matter in a round room. Forgot to say had tried the electric light on waking—no light. Felt the force of the remark of a little boy of five who had been in an English raid.

"You never heard such a racket in your life," he said. "Father leapt out of bed and struck his shins against the chest of drawers. Mother banged against a suit-case and fell over. Luckily neither of them hurt themselves; but it might have been serious."

The window on the landing gave good light. Her bedroom door and her bed were both open. She had fled.

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The hideous crash and crack went on, and a busy tac-tac. I suppose a machine-gun.

At last it was over. The comfort of the peace and silence. I slipped down between the cool sheets and lay in a joy of relief.

Was just off to sleep when p-ff and the electric light blazed in my face. Thought something really had happened that time. Woke with a start and could not sleep again.

Motor-cars buzzed through the empty streets, going in search of victims.

Next morning Jeanne came to me, looking haggard and aged. A Frenchman returning from the station, seeing his son off after seven days' permission, was "put to powder."

We are not told how many are hurt. I heard three, then nine, then over a hundred, and lastly twenty-two.

Judging from the motor-cars, the last might be the nearest. A Cinema Hall is destroyed. No one was in it.

All next day it was annoying when any one slammed a door.

Your still surviving and very loving,

N.

BY THE BALCONY IN MY ROOM.

Just a scribble to say I've come in from the Military Post Office (British). It's a long way off;

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but I had to go about a complication of money from my French bank. I met a British soldier who wanted to go there too. The poor fellow was nearly crying with distress. A wire had reached him at the Front saying his wife was dying, and his C.O. gave him leave at once to come as far as this. But he cannot cross to Blighty until the police at home corroborate the statement. He has to wire to them, await reply, and then make a new application for leave. Of course it is a necessary regulation; but why don't they let the wives know and get the police to wire in the first place? I had almost to hold him back by force, he wanted so badly to run on and leave me; but he would only have lost himself in the labyrinth of small streets. As soon as we reached the wide space and I could direct him, he ran as hard as he could lick. Poor chap! I hope he sees her again. Wish it for him with all your might.

Yours as before,

N.

On a Bench in the Gardens,

June 9th.

Dear,

A young Belgian—soldier of course—has just told me his two parents are living near the German Frontier. He gets no news, but has heard from a refugee cousin that all able-bodied boys have been taken into Germany. He said the King and

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Queen were constantly in the trenches, and no one knows why she was not shot. She exposes herself so much. He had seen her standing on the sand-bags, the wind blowing her skirt.

One night in the trenches he saw a card fluttering off a sack in front of him. It was dark, he pulled it off and stuck it in his pocket. He looked at it by daylight and a friend who knew English translated it. A Scotch girl, seventeen years old, a stenographer in Dundee, wished him good luck and sent her address. They have written to each other ever since, and now he wants to go to Scotland.

We had another raid this morning. I was sitting beside my open door on to the balcony, writing, thought it was gun-practice, not knowing the siren hoot was to warn us.

A bomb fell just across the way in the Gardens. We have been speaking of it on this bench; but none of us can take the trouble to go and look where it has fallen, though it is just over there on the far side of the potato patch.

Stranger still was a scene on the beach. People strolling round and playing that dear, idiotic French croquet with wide hoops and little balls with the screams and laughter that add so much to the fun. A party of very dirty British soldiers were talking to me—drivers off transport trains. A big gun fired several times. We saw the flash, then the smoke, and finally heard the report.

"They ain't firing that for nothing," one of them

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said suddenly. Was it some distant ship? A U-boat periscope?

We shall never know; and they went on hitting the absurd little balls and screaming with delight when one managed to go through the centre hoops and ring the little bell.

An English soldier talking to me now. He has been out here three years and only home once. His son is third officer on a transport and has been torpedoed twice. Once seventy-five hours in an open boat on the Atlantic. He tells me he has lost a comfortable little fortune through coming to the War. His wife and he had looked forward to a little homestead in the country that now can never be.

"Not but what it isn't the same with thousands," he said.

In one of the huts I had a chat with a sergeant. Clean-shaven man with a husky voice. He was in the Regulars—fought through Mons and that bitter retreat.

They had sat down to have a fry of bacon and a meal—and they got one of shells. It was a fair scrimmage. Women and children were fleeing away, the wounded being wheeled in barrows. The French guns did not arrive. He was wounded in the throat and lay thirty-three hours. Got out of his pack with the greatest difficulty—always began bleeding when he moved and went blind if he stood up. Cross-fire of shells from Boches and British. There was a little white house deserted. He crawled to a wet

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shell-hole for drink. A Gurkha came out of the white house. He signed to him to give him water. He had none; but helped him to the house, and, at last, stretcher-bearers came. He got to a base hospital in France and tetanus set in. He was moved to England. Twelve men died of it. His teeth were set like a vice. Dr. Swan tried a new serum on him. Presently he began to loosen. He was the first man cured by it.

He was discharged from service with a shilling a day for life, but joined up again. Wounded again. Discharged again. Joined up and has risen to be a sergeant.

How's that for spunk?

But he always talks with a husky voice from the wound at Mons.

Yours ever,

N.

IN MY BEDROOM,

June 13*th.*

Guns going, and Jeanne coming in with that odd withered look on her face to say:

"Une bataille navale."

"Just practising," I say to reassure her.

"No! Four months I had of it and can tell when it is real."

A man told me this of crossing the Channel. They ran into a fog and the captain stopped the ship. It lifted and they found themselves mid-channel with

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about sixty ships, stopped like themselves, around them. Their captain started.

A convoy shot across and signalled:

"Why are you starting without orders?"

"I stopped without orders and start without orders," he replied.

The convoy signalled that they were visiting the Admiral to know his orders; until then they must wait. They did. A signal came. All sixty ships moved off.

Strange to see so much mighty power waiting the signal of one man.

Another soldier showed me the photo of his fine son, and a military post-card received that day to say he was well.

"I often wish," he said sadly, "that I could take his place at the Front, and that if he is to be taken, it might be me, and him live out his young life."

Two more wonderful sing-songs at B——. Last night I drove down in an old fly.

There was a boy who ought to be a clown. Perhaps he is. They swarmed round the piano, and called for me to recite "Gunga Deen."

He sat just beneath me, while I stood on the form that two of them sat on to steady. He watched with the gravest face. Sometimes sitting on the piano with a bang and pretending to fall dead at the "Charged or broke, or cut,"—and at "For Gawd's sake bring us water!" he called, "Some water quick, with a little rum in it for the lady."

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Once I wagged a finger at him, and he hung a hooked cane on it very gravely.

When it came to the prayer moment, I told the men to go away if they didn't like it. I looked down on his uplifted face and said:

"Don't you want to go away?"

"No!" he yelled, as if a pin had been stuck in him.

Before leaving I said:

"I am very proud of my new son."

"Proud of me?" he said. "Oh, you make me cry! Don't be proud of me, Mother."

Then he said he would see Mother to her carriage, and about two hundred turned out of the Hut to watch him do a Charlie Chaplin stunt as he escorted me.

The old French coachman nearly fell off the box, laughing.

Yours as ever,

N.

P.S.—Have heard from the men that they were bombarding . . . this morning when I began. So Jeanne was right. The guns were in earnest.

June 30th.

My best Boy,

Men from the Front have just told me of the Great Mine. One of them had worked upon it for two years, and was luckily there when, as he said, they tore up a good bit of Belgium.

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It was extraordinary to watch. The ground heaved and shook like the waves of the sea, and burst in great rifts and chasms. Six hundred Boches were killed in one trench.

The men tell me a huge cannon from behind fires right over their heads and the bomb travels through the air, making a noise like an armoured train. Sh-sh, sh-sh, sh-sh.

"When we're in the underground at home," a boy said, "and hear a train coming we'll all be ducking our heads."

Everything goes to the minute. Aeroplanes, guns, infantry, all work into each other's scheme like clockwork. Rumour has it that an air-raid destroyed the Boche aerodromes, and they said they could believe it, for they never saw any Boche aeroplanes at the Front. But another added:

"Not that we do anyhow, for they fly too high. We can't hit them for they're too high, and they miss us all the time for we're too low—just skimming over their heads."

Yet another man was blown up by the mine. He said coming down on the earth was like settling on a blanc-mange, it was all squidgy and soft.

These are things you just must hear, so I'm sitting up in bed, very tired, to write them, and now out goes the light.

Bye-bye. Sleep sweet!

Yours,

N.

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DEAR,

It is odd and rather disreputable living in a bedroom and having all one's meals out. But the expense in this hotel, and the crossness of Madame! Belgians accost me as I return up the darkening street, frightfully tired, to bed.

"So you walk like that, all alone?" or, "Good evening, and may I walk with you?"

"No, you may not," I shout cheerfully—and they wish they had not spoken, for all the street hears my response.

Last night a picturesque scene. French soldiers arrived on the gravel space before the Public Gardens under my windows.

Pale blue uniforms intermingling in a kind of mist. Gravel-coloured helmets on their heads. They picketed their rifles. Backs heaped with packs and cooking-pots. Men and women came up to take them to their billets, and by sixes they went away, led by a man "in civil" or a woman, and once by two little boys in check pinafores. A big, black dog was with them, keen and very pleased.

Miss P. was on the balcony with me. We agreed that their grey-blue uniforms fade out of sight long before the khaki.

We watched our men—still single spots down the long streets, while six Frenchmen on the square beneath faded into a smudge. The eye softens and weakens to blue; while it is hit with certainty by black or brown.

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SOME SOLDIERS AND LITTLE MAMMA

Have just gone to the window and find the soldiers are back here this morning. An informal parade, without rifles or packs.

They are now standing in a compact and perfect circle. A man in their midst reading instructions. A fishwoman, basket on back and white cap on head, leans forward to listen.

Letters are rather amusing here. Not necessary to stamp them. Great saving of money. We write "On Active Service" on the envelope, and I take mine along the street, two blocks along, Americans would say, give them in at an office, where they are censored by—the clergy. I couldn't resist writing the lovingest letters to my six best men to set 'em guessing. May set the six men guessing too. Lucky I keep a Dream Person, they don't see my letters to you.

Best of all,

Bye-bye,

N.

IN A HEDGE ON THE ROAD TO B——.

DEAR,

There aren't many hedges in France, but I've found one. Am settled on the bank and look away over red poppies and white dog daisies to green fields and little alder trees. The Belgian Camp is close by; but they don't seem to be about.

They wouldn't let me have a motor; so I've fallen to a bike, or rather fallen off it. It's a French one

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with narrow tyres and they got caught in the tram-line and, when I jerked out of that, nearly got under a motor-car, so fell upon the pavement, where a kind British Thomas picked me up and straightened me out and smoothed me down.

And now I've got as far as the hedge outside the town, on my way to Camp, and my left knee hurts abominably.

But listen to this. Two officers told me of recent engagements. One of them had thirty-seven casualties among his men, shot from behind. One man had his two legs taken away from beneath him. Another man, he copied, peering round to watch for shells and call, "Duck!" One came silently, blew his face right in and buried him with two others. It took two hours to dig him out.

"Was he alive?" I asked.

"Well, I stuck some morphia into him. Doubtless he is dead now."

My knee feels better.

Bye-bye, I'm going on,

N.

A.P.O. X.,
B.E.F.,
June 21*st*, 1917.

DEAR,

Have spent a night in the Belgian Station Hospital. Invited by the Matron—a very charming woman.

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Eleven o'clock at night I crossed the bridge and found my way to the little hospital, a long, low, wooden building. It was pitch dark and I fumbling; but, as I knocked, they opened and held open the door of a lighted inner room. Five nurses invited me to enter. The floor was spread with stretchers and mattresses, on which they slept, ready to be called at any emergency. An English nurse had a cubicle off the long ward, where she sits up all night. We had hot chocolate and biscuits. At last, past midnight, the wounded soldiers came. Forty-four in all. They spend the night and pass on next morning.

Nearly all walked. Some fourteen were carried on stretchers. They sat at table and were instantly served with hot coffee and hunks of bread and butter. Those needing attention were carried away to the Salle des Pansements at the far end of the ward. Long tables covered with snow-white oil-cloth, on which the stretcher or the man could be laid. Chairs for those who could sit. They let me pass everywhere, even where the wounds were being dressed, with cigarettes to comfort them.

Very soon they were all getting into bed. A very short affair. Cheery good nights and, "Le Bon Dieu vous bénit!" And Madame and the Médecin-Major offered to bring me back to the hotel.

We rang and rang.

Useless.

I knew how the officer felt who broke the glass and bellowed.

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Madame took me back to the Hospital. Happily no one was in the officers' cubicle, and she and I each lay down on a bed. Strange lying there, hearing the groans and moans of wounded men; the ceaseless cough of one who must have tuberculosis. Poor fellow, he lay just the other side of the thin door.

I slept till 4.30. She, till an orderly opened the shutters at 6.30. We got up and went into the ward where the men were already dressing.

At the far end, curtains had been withdrawn from a tiny Altar in the corner.

Only a cheap, poor, little Altar with tinsel flowers, and yet it shone there, gay, peaceful, near us all.

A young priest—*réformé*, he too has played a man's part in the great Conflict—stood tall, before it. Nurses in snowy coifs clustered, kneeling on chairs around the little steps. An orderly, neat in close-fitting, dark-blue coat acted as acolyte, kneeling reverently. Several of the soldiers approached and took part, sitting on the benches. Others stayed by their beds, or in them, following with bent heads and whispering lips. Others again were unheeding, slapping on braces and buttoning breeches.

Out into the morning freshness and all the world seemed born anew.

Be a good boy,

Yours,

N.

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DEAR,

And now I must tell you about sing-songs. There's nothing I love better, unless it's a French Fair or a Circus.

Sometimes I am so happy—I just glow with it and wonder at the gentleness of all the world.

Sing-song at the C.W.L. Hut. Much touched by the very nice men and fine singers who turned up. It was Pay-Day and the room only half-full, and we were badly rushed for time, but it was very pleasant. Private W. and Corporal K. pleased me with their gentlemanliness.

They asked me to their Camp. Stationary Hospital. Pleasant little spot when the sun shines in the midst of cornfields by a canal. Had an awful time getting there, dead against wind, blizzard blowing. But it was a rare good concert in a marquee, and lots of funny songs.

A man told three good stories of Archie. "Nice chap, but no luck."

Archie enlisted, and the sergeant sarcastically told him the War would be soon over now. Archie blandly agreed. The sergeant with some language asked him what he meant? "Why, I never could keep a job," he said.

Archie had some undergarments that he much admired. This was very delicately told, no doubt in deference to me, for I was sitting in the stalls, *i.e.* basket chairs with the officers. He thought it a pity not to show them. He did—at Parade. And the

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officer was very rude. Later in the day he met Archie, who never saluted. So he called him up and asked him if he did not know him.

"Why, yes, sir," said Archie. "But I was afraid you were still cross with me!"

The man stopped once more in the middle of his song, swung himself round a post off the platform, recovered his balance and said:

"I've thought of another thing about Archie. Nice chap—but no luck."

I applauded loudly, and he said:

"You see she loves him. She loves Archie."

This time he got C.B. He wrote and told his mother. He was so distressed, he wrote to her: "Mother, I am a defaulter." She wrote back congratulating him on his promotion, and added: "Never be hard on a private, Archie. Remember always you too have been in the ranks."

The sergeants took me off to tea in their Mess. A pretty little tent with yellow hangings, flowers on the table and a big gramophone. There this story was told:

A man thought there had been air-raids every night for a month. His bedroom had a wooden partition to a stable, where stood a mule, who kicked the partition diligently.

And we have had another raid. Wakened by the sound of guns, went on the balcony.

Flashlights were seeking, travelling round in three great roads of light, showing up the little

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black puffs of cloud where shells had burst. Other shells were travelling over the sky like big stars—very red, but smaller and less spectacular than last time. It was awfully cold, and I went back to bed. Oddly enough, fell asleep before the turmoil ceased.

Mrs. P. a few evenings later, dining in the other hotel, made me weep with laughter describing the scenes that took place there.

The very few men left in the dining-room—it was late, I had come from a far Camp—and Madame in her desk, a true Frenchwoman, wise, with her gentle look of intellectual responsibility, laughed aloud to hear Mrs. P. laugh. She is fresh, bonny, and great-hearted as a big child.

Every one rushed to the cellar.

She caught her foot at the top of the stairs and tumbled, pell-mell, down into the middle of the crowd, huddled at the foot in the dark, frightening them badly. They thought it was a bomb. The women were in hideous flannelette dressing-gowns, front hair done up in Hinde's Curlers, back hair falling dank. Why they make themselves ugly to go to bed I never can think. A self-satisfied man, pleased with himself in silk pyjamas. A young man, highly protective to his pretty wife, in pink cotton pyjamas with every hair on his head standing upright. A dramatic young woman, in a silk dressing-gown, took the bottom step of the stairs as a stage, spread her arms and declared herself ready to die. Another

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girl, running down the cellar steps, stopped short and called out:

"Are there rats? I'm more frightened of rats than Zeppelins."

Another time I must go down to the cave, as the French call it, to see these delights myself.

But it is sad to hear that a Frenchwoman, hastening with her little child along the street to get into one of these caves, advertised in the streets "in case of bombardment," was struck by a shell and both killed.

The pretty housemaid, Alys, who has replaced Jeanne, the refugee—who has "refuged" herself further West—told me there had been casualties in B. Camp. I was there in the afternoon, dreading what I should hear. But there were none. I started early and visited two other Huts on the way, the Christian Association, and found a pretty, quiet, restful Hut—dark wood, long lattice windows, little tables and chairs. Many men sitting about reading and writing—no mart of eatables, but books, piano and quiet.

Mr. H. took me on and introduced me to the Y.M.C.A. Here again a handsome Hut, a veranda outside; inside, chairs and small tables scattered, and at the far end a good platform, a piano, flowers, plants and chairs. Mr. P. asked me to come to them the following Thursday. Mr. H. took me back to their garden—rows of potatoes, beans, some simple flowers from seed, a wire fence, on which soldiers'

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shirts were hanging to dry. He told me they were covered every Sunday morning. They are at the edge of the Camp, and look away to the flat fields and scattered trees between them and the sea.

I put on my torn oil-skin and battled on cheerily against the wind, up the road past the big windmill, on to the broken road in the Camp.

Men just returned from marching, standing in huge knots amongst the tents, still in their iron helmets, greeted me in small shrill voices as "Mamma."

An elderly soldier sitting with his legs in the ditch said quietly as I passed:

"Will you be up along this evening?"

"Yes."

"I'm coming, then."

Another evening I got caught at a corner by the soldiers marching past, and stood with my bicycle, thinking they would never end.

"Every now and then some one called:

"Hullo, Ma!"

"Here's Mummy."

Once a boy called:

"Oh, Mother, I'm such a tired boy!"

And when I thought they were all strangers, suddenly a deep voice called out of the dusty ranks:

"Mother darling."

They were Northampton Steelbacks, the laddies!

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And I hear to-day have been cut up cruelly. God help their real mothers.

It was jolly in the noisy Hut, in spite of the trampling of heavy feet. I got a laugh by calling out:

"Avast there with the fairy footfall!"

It was pay-night. Every one was happy. Two men played the piano remarkably well. They clustered close when I recited. One boy behind me called out:

"Go it, Ma! Give it us, Ma."

When I got down an awfully nice lad came up and apologized.

"He just doesn't know how to behave," he said. "And I don't wonder. No one has taken any trouble with us lads since we joined the Army. I joined at seventeen and went straight to Gallipoli. Wounded after four months and sent home. Been out here fighting since and wounded again. Hope this may be my last spell at the Front." He was off there on the morrow.

A minute later he said:

"This is why I want it to end. This is what I want to get home to." He opened a little leather case. Inset in the oval was the sweetest little face of a young, laughing girl, childlike in her pretty curls.

Take care of yourself, dearest,
Ever and always yours,
N.

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July 9th, 1917.

DEAR,

But the best thing of all was at Mrs. W.'s charming Hut yesterday! It is right down on open railway lines—no platform or sheds, but the lines used as a sort of junction for men going up and coming down from the Front.

A long, low brown hut like a little cottage. Palings, a wee garden with bright stocks and small Chinese trees in porcelain pans. Lattice windows, rose chintz and muslin curtains, book-cases, cosy corners, low window-seats and a deep fireplace. Chalked in white along a dark beam:

"When ye sit by the fire yerselves to warme
Be sure that ye tongues doe ye neighboures noe harme."

Officers come in. Men are served through the open windows. Had a jolly little lunch with Mrs. W. Coffee and cigarettes. Sold at an open window. Then took my little white parasol and went out to the men, waiting in a field.

"Would you like me to tell some stories?"

"Not 'arf!"

German prisoners were packing stores in the background, and the foreground was picturesque with picketed rifles, packs, and men in khaki.

They sat round as tight as they could, while I told stories and repeated verses. A train started whistling in the middle. I told it to stop, and the train and I had some conversation; the men rolling on their tummies with laughter.

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Then we went over the lines. They packed into cattle-trucks. Away went the train. Much waving and shouting.

"Bye-bye, boys! Bye-bye!"

"Bye-bye, Mummie. Bye-bye!"

Then back to the little hut; and more trains coming in and going out all the time.

Mrs. W. tells me to come whenever I can, and you bet I will. It's great. It's unique. A little English home—out on those railway lines—and all those blessed boys.

Bye-bye,
Ever yours,
N.

A.P.O. X.,
B.E.F.

DEAR,

Perhaps my letters are perplexing; so here is one to straighten them out.

Of course you know by now that I am attached to one of the Societies who have Huts for the physical and moral well-being of the men.

Sometimes I have to cheer the workers. They are a noble set of men and women, working hard all hours of the day, sometimes in a town like this into the night. It is real shop-keeping. They are on their feet for hours. And they are always good and gentle to the soldiers and often beastly to each other. There is the class difference—making such bitterness

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among the English—and there is that stupid way they have of being short with each other. They think it honest. But, oh, what it is to be kind! But always, whatever happens behind the counters, the soldiers have their attention and untiring care. They are great.

There are just two places I want you to have clearly in your mind's eye. The Railway Siding, where the little brown Hut stands down almost on the extending rails. A field beside it, bounded by pyramids of cases where the Boche prisoners—idle. In the middle of the field, soldiers sit in groups to eat their rations; and, if they have one piece of bread between two, give their mate the bigger piece.

I leave my bicycle leaning against the cottage palings, unhook my parasol, and come out among the men.

"Would you like Little Mamma to tell you stories?"

They make room for me.

"Are you good?"

"All good, Mamma!" They answer in shrill voices, picking up the game at once.

"What, all good?"

"All good, Mamma," yet higher, with childlike innocence.

"That's a pity, when I like the little wicked ones best."

Then they find their natural voices and natures and assure me they are bad.

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"All you wicked ones come close, so Mother can keep her eye on you, and I can talk away to those good ones over there."

As the laugh goes up at the stories, men move over from other groups.

"That's the stuff to gie 'em," they call.

I'm offered a cake, *i.e.* hard biscuit, and generally eat one, for company, wave it in my hand and take a bite out of it from time to time. Talk rolls on from funny tales to politics, from republicans to the War, over to the Colonies and rages round theology, till a sergeant calls:

"Fall in!"

They stand in lines, shoulder packs, shout their numbers, and cross the lines, often to wait another hour, or more, between the rails, where I join them again, or get another crowd, beginning with the story, because of the moral in it, of the stout old party who went up to a policeman and asked:

"Where do I get the car, inspector?"

"You'll get it in the rear, ma'am, if you stand upon them tracks."

Generally I am safely placed; but I have been seized by the elbow and hastened into safety with a friendly:

"Nip over, Ma!"

And sometimes the trains close in on each other and it's dizzy work standing between two, each going the other way.

"I half expected you to climb into one of the

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trucks," a guard remarked, seeing me caught. "But I daresay you'd be more frightened travelling with the men than you would be of the trains."

"Frightened of the men! I couldn't be. There's not a man in the British Army but is bent on taking care of me. They would even save me from my crosser and more irritable self if they could. I'm always telling them, some day they'll make a woman of me, if only I stay with them long enough."

This is quite true, dear. Sometimes I tell them of the time I got into a tram to come among them. My foot was sore, and I waited thirty-five minutes in the tram, which never moved. I asked a British sergeant when it would.

"In another quarter of an hour."

"Damn," I said, and got out and limped on.

"'Oh, don't say that, ma'am,' he said. Boys, he really did. 'I must,' I replied. 'I know nothing worse.'"

"I wish I knew nothing worse," a young lad said, lying on the ground beside me—one of the wicked ones.

"Now isn't that pathetic, boys?" I ask, as I repeat what the little one said to the next lot.

"I'm very glad I do," a burly sergeant remarked grimly.

"Now that isn't pathetic at all, boys," I add, when adding the sergeant's remark to the tale. "But perhaps it is," I say, as a little afterthought. "Perhaps it is the most pathetic of them all."

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And they agree.

And so to-day's happenings and chat make more talk for to-morrow. And talking of street cars. I tell them of a friend of mine in an awfully slow car in Colorado Springs.

"Can't you go any faster?" she asked the conductor.

"I can, ma'am," he replied. "But I'm supposed to stick to the car."

After a raid, with nerves a-jangled, I pretend to be frightened at sudden noises.

"Save me, boys! Save me!" I cry, as a train suddenly bangs or hoots. "The Boches are upon us!"

They lift their bundhooks or pretend to fall dead.

"You're saved, Ma! Saved this time."

"Oh, my brave boys, what I owe you!"

"There's a wee girlie protecting you," a young corporal remarked one day.

I turned to find a Jock just behind me, in a martial attitude, threatening the train. He had taken off his coat and was standing in his kilt and stays.

And I told them of the little girl who went to see her father in a kiltie regiment.

"Will Father give me that pretty petticoat when he's found the man who stole his trousers?" she asked.

Once when they had fallen in, men in the back

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lines kept stepping out to shake hands with me. The corporal in control walked around the lines and advanced towards me, with his arm extended. I thought he had come to blame me for upsetting the British Army, and tried to get away. Still he came on with his arm out. Still I ran. Tried to get round the lines and hide. Still he came.

I faced him.

It was the dear boy who had been sitting close beside me, come to shake hands too.

Drama reaches its height with the good-byes.

They have given me so much of themselves that it is with a horrid pang I part with them.

"They put us in cattle-trucks, Ma, and just as surely as the cattle we're going up to be slaughtered."

"Boys, don't talk like that, I can't bear it."

"Don't make a bit of difference how we talk. That's what happens."

"Bye-bye, bye-bye." Here a sudden laugh, there a cap off, a hand kissed, or a pair of eyes that look deeply into mine, saying farewell to all that womanhood spells to him.

Tears and laughter race each other for supremacy all through the livelong day.

And the hand-grips——

Yours through this little dream-life to the real,

N.

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A.P.O. X.,
B.E.F.

DEAR,

And the second place you must see clearly where many happy hours flit past is the black Hut on the confines of the Camp, facing the wood.

The last piece of the road is really the worst in France. Unless it is worse close up to the trenches. Generally I bicycle; but on wet nights I have to commandeer a fly. No easy matter, for the English have spoilt all the prices.

They pay five francs a head, and generally six officers get into each vehicle, to be taken back to Camp after dinner; so there is thirty francs straight off for the driver, whose usual fare, out of war-time, is one franc, sixty-five centimes an hour.

I get taken out and waited for an hour for fifteen francs; but only some of them will do it. And as I always stay longer than an hour they generally have twenty francs.

The English do not understand that when the French—particularly the peasants—ask a price it is a kind of game to see what the fool-stranger will give.

"Five francs," they reply gravely, never expecting to get it. And there are heaps of English who would strip themselves of all rather than declare publicly they will not pay a price. Young men are particularly prone to this sort of sensitiveness. And so the prices soar to fantastic heights and the French

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complain there is no longer any living in their own country—unless of course heaven has opened on them and they are the ones that are accumulating these unexpected and easily acquired riches. But I have one or two nice old coachmen who take a keen interest in the little outing, and if I can get the horse that is *réformé*—an English horse, a compatriot, his present master tells me—we drive out swiftly through the fields.

The moment my head is in the Hut I know if they are recruits from Blighty or men from the Front.

Before I have been five minutes among recruits I know if they have just arrived or if they have had three days under the Hut-manager's gentlemanising influence.

For they are a wild lot, the new boys from Blighty. But somehow he reaches them.

Sometimes the men, particularly the older ones, gather to the far end of the Hut or out on the veranda and I give a talk on Canada, Khartoum, the Wild West, or some such subject.

A lottery, too, is good fun.

Friends in the States gave me some handsome woollen shirts, safety razors and rubber sponges. I take four each of these and add some tobacco, soap, sponges, post-cards, toys and a small Japanese doll that squeaks. These are the prizes.

The men draw numbers up to a hundred, lending three caps to hand them about the Hut. I mount on the form and shout:

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"Number Twelve wins a prize for never giving a sergeant pain." Up jumps some rare rascal.

"Number Twenty wins a prize because of the language he knows—French language."

"A stout shirt for a stout boy!" A particularly lean man claims it.

"Pa-pa, pa-pa," the doll squeaks. "Papa, Number Sixty-two." And Papa is shoved up, grinning.

Perhaps you need to sleep in wet tents for weeks to know this is fun.

Yes, we are easily amused up in the Hut, there is not a blasé person among us, and we know how to play at pretending.

Sometimes the Toy Orchestra gets away with great verve. Sometimes things stick.

Then I teach the audience how to behave at concerts.

"To-morrow's press-notice will run: 'Deafening applause greeted the brilliant performance,'" and, at least, we have the deafening applause.

Farmyard is a sure catch. They cluck and grunt and moo and growl. Once we had a fine North Country farmer. He talked to the animals, too realistic for words to tell it. The dog is always excellent.

And there is a wonderful cow. I thought he had gone; but yesterday, instead of applauding, he made that loud harsh noise, most inadequately expressed by mooing.

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"Oh, my cow!" I cried with joy. "My glorious cow. I thought you had gone."

But it is not beneficial for letter writing. I bent over a sergeant.

"A bit noisy," I said. "Is it as bad as the guns?"

"Worse."

Out on the veranda, I pointed at the new moon looking as if a giant had pierced the blue sky with his thumb-nail.

"Turn the money in your pockets," they called.

Last night they were Recruities. We sang the American Battle Hymn and the whole Hut took up:

"Glory, Glory, Hallelujah!"

A lad said:

"Oh, shut it! That's too pi. The collection will be coming next."

I asked for silence before going. The noise went on.

"Don't try us with any prayer-stuff," one said to me. "We ain't that lot!"

But I spoke to those at the piano:

"You can go away, you know, if you like." And added to the collection-boy, "I know you don't like it."

"Now why pick me out?" he said. "I ain't no worse nor any of the rest."

"Do you want to stay, laddie?"

"Why, yes," he said.

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I got on the form, read: Gen. ii. 7; Job xxxiii. 4; 2 Cor. iv. 7; part of 2 Cor. vi. 7.

A boy went down of himself to try and still the clamour at the door, where men were coming in.

Every head went down in Silent Prayer. Blessing—and then they clapped.

Some did and others hushed it.

But I was pleased at their clapping.

I love the little, wild, wicked ones. Drove home in a glow of happiness.

Bye-bye,

Yours till to-morrow,

N.

P.S.—They cannot get my name. Sometimes I wish I were called Jane Box. But it is all right; because they all—even the policemen and railway guards—call me Little Mamma.

IN A BEANFIELD,

July 2nd, 1917.

MY VERY DEAR,

Don't you wish you were sitting on the edge of this beanfield with me? It is open to the white, straight road, on a lovely hump of a hill, crowned by a glorious old wooden windmill on rough grass, perched up on high stilts and grey with age. Can you feel the wind? Its rushing. And see over the fields the blue, blue strip of sea? Whitecaps dancing. Ironclads cutting up water. All the world is moving.

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The planet spinning in space, and the dull, leaden sound of distant guns, where its inhabitants are busy slaying each other. They say at night one can see the flash of guns along the invisible ridge by standing on the platform of the old windmill. It looks like matches being struck.

And here have I been getting into mischief. Came into the beanfield to gather cornflowers, and the children from the cottage ran out to help me. They are standing thigh-high, I knee-high in the green growing things. A small boy broke off some pods of beans and was throwing them away, when my fatal economy betrayed me.

"But cast them not away," I said. "They are good to eat."

And splitting the pod took and ate the soft, bright, green, little beans. They are good too! And now the children are eating them as hard as they can eat.

I looked up just then and said:

"If you eat too many they will give you a pain in the stomach!"

But they are taking that risk.

Farther up the hill some French *poilus* are sitting on the bank. Shall talk to them as I pass, and now must push on my little steel steed, lead it past the whirling windmill and make what headway I can in the teeth of the gale. The wild dust is flying down the road. By the by the roads are too awful for anything. Such holes and lumps you never saw.

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One dodges lorries and ambulances and country carts, to say nothing of Chinese labour, taking the whole road, and they don't move even if you bump them in the back. Then I fall off and they grin, and I shout at their sergeant, "Is the road only for them?" And he is surprised at my speaking English and tells them to get over to the right, which they do about five minutes after I have left them behind me.

But to-day I met the explanation of the state of the roads. I thought they were Tanks—I was so excited, I fell off my bicycle and ordered the last one to stop. All three pulled up as though I were a brigadier.

"Are you Tanks?" I yelled through the puffing noise.

"No, ma'am, Caterpillars."

The kind and dirty driver consoled me:

"Just the same as Tanks, only Tanks carry guns."

No wonder they can climb anywhere with those lumps on their wide wheels, and dig out huge holes in the straight, white roads of France.

Later.

Well, I pressed on to the camp I didn't know, over the hill and the wide cornfields, down a road to the left, tree-bordered, and into the Camp I was seeking.

Went in the back way, pushing my bike up a

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little path, and came into rows of tents. Men sitting on the wooden floors, shaving and washing.

Well I did, for it collected an audience. And they poured into the big Hut, not yet finished building.

Dear, it is a horses' hospital. Of course you knew the horses would need hospitals; but I had never thought of it. They offered to take me round and invited me to operations. But I declined that day. My mind must prepare itself. I've sat with hundreds of wounded men. One can bring them cheer. But horses—the poor dumb things. At least I must have some carrots and apples.

Coming back and the wind behind me, though it dropped a bit, as it does at nightfall, I made furious pace, and reached the level crossing out by the fortifications just at nine o'clock and caught the French sentry locking the gates for the night.

I sprang off, gasping.

"Monsieur, what luck you are still here. It saves me going a mile and more over cobble-stones in the town."

He opened again for me.

"But Madame need not distress herself. Even if I am gone, she need only go up the Embankment, along the little path and cross the lines less than a hundred yards away."

France!

Can you imagine that in Germany? A soldier with a bayonet guarding the gate all day and telling one to go up the little path at night?

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Is this freedom worth fighting for?

Can we be sane, human, living beings, looking after ourselves, or must we be driven cattle with "Thou shalt not" written all over our lives?

It was pitch dark before I reached town.

But I love Camp B. best of all. A boy at the piano said quietly when some one called me "Mamma":

"There's a better name than that!"

"I know there is."

He and two others called me "Mother" all the evening.

Is life happy? Is it simple and sweet and well worth living?

Always your own,

N.

P.S.—Never forget there are Beanfields in the world, with little, soft green Beans, and Ships and Windmills and lots of Lovely Things.

A.P.O. X.,
B.E.F.,
France.

Best of Boys,

And a contretemps arose.

Behold me jumping into a little fly before the hotel with a bagful of instruments and gifts for a Lottery on Saturday evening to go off to B. Camp.

The old Belgian refugee on the box turned round

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and said he wouldn't take me for less than twenty francs. Fifteen had been agreed.

Out of the fly I hopped, thinking he would tell me that just this once and for me, or some other such tosh, he would do it. Instead of which he whipped up the horse and drove off.

No getting another. Time went by until it was too late.

So next morning, Sunday, observe me taking tram and trudging to the Hut to make my apologies.

The Hut-manager was out, but my Irish friend welcomed me warmly.

"Two hundred men sat here yesterday," he said. "Their legs hanging off the veranda, watching for you to come."

No one was so disappointed as myself.

The Hut was closed at that hour, but he kindly opened the doors. I hit the piano, and in about three minutes a hundred men and more skipped over from the tents and thronged around.

A man played "Keep the Home-Fires Burning."

More and more men poured in. We were in for a happy morning.

I never knew just what happened; but a clergyman arrived to hold Morning Service for a few in the little chapel tucked on to the back of the Hut.

I don't know if he were a martinet and disapproved of the babel we were making, for I did not see him; but the Irishman—second in command of

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the Hut—came to me, trembling with suppressed Hibernian rage at the way he had been addressed.

"You have got to go and we have got to get them all out at once," he said.

I jumped on a form, told them I had to leave them, but, before I did, should we not have a little silence together to think of the loved ones at home?

When each man had found his real self to find the real in his loved ones, and in our brothers fighting at the Front and to know them all safe in the Eternal Love of God.

Profound silence.

A blessing, and then I went down to the door and shook hands with each man as he passed out.

The warm-hearted Irishman, standing by my side, said, with a gasp of relief, as the last one went:

"You have them in the hollow of your hand."

The Hut was shut. It was already twelve o'clock. We arranged I should come on Wednesday, and a notice be printed. Waving to the men I walked back a couple of miles to the tram and so into the town.

And on Wednesday I arrived safely, and this is the beautiful part and why I told you all this.

The notice had been printed:

> "Wednesday. Miss B. (The Boys' 'Little Mamma') will entertain and distribute prizes to those who are successful in the Lottery. (No Entry Fee.)

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Friday. Concert and Sing-Song.
Items by Lce.-Cpl. Davies,
Private Hunt,
Mons. Campanal (Belgian Army),
and others."

Above Little Mamma some one had printed in pencil a big "BLESS HER" and before Mons. Campanal was written "We were at——" making it "We were at Mons."

It is the treasure of my life.

Bye-bye, my blessed boy,

Your happy,

N.

P.S.—It really is nice in war-time. People are friendly. We get right into the real immediately and talk to each other naturally. A lovely set of boys, officers back from leave, were here the other night. One might still be in the nursery, he is so just what he is and no frills. I call him Master Guy, and they all Little Mamma me.

He loves toy instruments and I gave him a whistle and a drum. A real good drum.

"I'm feeling sad," an awfully nice lad said suddenly.

"Then just go out and feel sad in the street," a big one remarked. "We don't want you feeling sad here!"

They offered to take me up to the Front and

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show me the Fireworks if I would sit on the floor of the motor and return in the dark before morning.

I would have gone like a shot if I had belonged only to myself. As it was I went up to bed when they left, and Master Guy gave me some last little hoots on the whistle as I climbed the stairs.

P.S. 2.—Don't be too grown-up.

A few days later.

O Master Guy,
I'll surely try
To write to you this morning.
So do be good,
You know you should,
And listen to my warning.

You are so nice
And full of spice,
You boys from out the trenches.
But, oh, my dear,
Take every care
Whene'er you meet the wenches!

Keep full of joy,
You darling boy,
'Tis fun that will befriend you.
This from Mamma,
Who writes from far,
And good things shall attend you.

Yes—good things shall attend you!
Hoot, toot, toot!

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ON ACTIVE SERVICE,
July 5th, 1917.

DEAR,

So much to say, and so little time to say it. It seems I have strength to live a life, but not to write about it. But things so good are happening, they must be written down.

Two lovely evenings in Y.M.C.A. Huts. Big audiences, quiet and attentive. A relief to have them seated on rows of chairs in silence to listen comfortably. At the first Hut Cinema was going on in an adjoining shack. The manager had to attend to it, and feared I would have a poor show. But the subject was Khartoum. Some of the men had been there, and they rolled up and up. The tales are fine, of Gordon, of Kitchener, of Lord Roberts, whom I met there—have a little episode of him and a child which they love—of Slatin Pasha, the Sirdar and desert heroes, concluding with an afternoon on the battlefield of Omdurman, standing beside Sir Reginald Wingate, while he gave me himself the history of the Day. I had forgotten the name of the Highland Regiment that was caught in ambush. They called it up to me:

"The Gordon Highlanders!"

Of course it was the Gordons who were to be the first into Omdurman in honour of him who shared their name, and everlastingly will leap to the thought at mention of Khartoum.

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At the end they clapped, and clapped. I thought they never would have finished; and, when they did, they began clapping all over again.

The other was a big, breezy Hut with glorious views from the window. I gave the same Talk.

From the platform I could see the men sitting outside, legs spread before them, Lotto cards between them. They make a pool, a man shouts the numbers, and the first man to fill his card clears it. They are so intent on their cards, they don't see me as I pass. I call out in high tones, "Twenty-eight!" "Fifty-six!" They look up in a hurry and burst out laughing.

And why I tell you about them that evening is because the men who were playing got up and came into the Hut. First two came and I never expected the others. But by degrees they all came. Many of them looking in at the windows.

Have booked speaking engagements every evening for nearly a month at Huts, some near, some far.

Began this yesterday; but three things I must write down at once, though I'm tired.

At outdoor meeting by the train to-day a big rough Berkshire said when they were all clustering round, bidding me follow them up:

"Bring us the Joy. We do get down-hearted and out of luck. We want you to buck us up and bring us the right kind of cheer."

And Colonel W——, D.S.O.—his men passed through to-day—has just told me: "You are the

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kind I want among my men. If the fellows in the Base towns can't keep themselves clean and straight, at all events there's time in front of them. But these lads of mine—why, when they go up over the lid, as they call it, half of them stay there for ever. It's they who need you. They want to talk straight, as they can to you."

He told me the soldiers' Lotto is called "Full House," and is the only gambling permitted among them.

I told him of a little young lad. As he gripped my hand, saying good-bye, suddenly his face crumpled up, and he said, "Give me a kiss, Mummie." I would gladly have kissed the boy for his mother; but what would the British goody-goodies have said? This constrained me.

"Well for you it did," he cried, shouting with laughter. "You'd have had the whole regiment to deal with if you had let one of them."

This is a stupid little letter; but the best I can do to-night.

Beddy-bye,
Your sleepy,
N.

P.S.—N. might stand for Napoleon; but in this instance it does not.

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IN THE TRAIN,
July 10*th*.

DEAR,

Actually in the train again and very good it seems. Two French officers, middle-aged, thin and alert. I told them of a French soldier digging trenches in the sand with his two little girls. Their eyes filled with tears. They may have lost their own. An Australian, Roman Catholic chaplain, in the far corner. A man of large humanity, and speaking French.

Sun shining. Colours bright. We passed a train in a station partly demolished by gun-fire. Back carriages crushed in.

Later.

Mr. W. met me at the Station. A British Red-cap needed some help with my Permit papers, but got all particulars correctly; and we crossed the road to a little inn. Room refused at first; but Madame la Patronne yielded. Said her rooms had been spoilt by the bombardment, but if I did not mind débris——

There was no débris—only the passage wall cracked and the paper hanging.

A garden wall on the other side of the street. Lime-trees moving in a light breeze. A wilderness with wild garden-roses, growing on great straggly bushes. The air pure, but pure!

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Met the delightful people of the Scottish Church Hut at *déjeuner;* and they carried me off in their car to their Hut, in the midst of green, standing corn, a little garden before it. A fine, big Hut with dividing wall that slides away from the theatre. Dr. Drummond holds classes in the theatre on Psychology and Physiology on Monday nights. They are crowded. A programme every evening of the week. They play Musical Chairs and Turn the Trencher on the Social Evenings. Their men are from the Front on short rest.

Several officers came in to sit-down tea. Taking his men away from the Front lines, one told his men, as soon as he could, they might smoke. Instantly they were all illumined. Every man had a lighted match at his mouth.

They motored me away to give a talk in the Hut where I was expected. Here, chiefly railway men. A platform at the far end, a piano on it, benches turned towards it. A chaplain came in. Fine young fellow. Audience rolled up. Some six or seven hundred. They listened gloriously to an hour's talk on Khartoum. Gave a lottery and told them of Richard. Hymn and "God save the King." Much enthusiasm.

Walking away the chaplain said:

"You don't know what it means to get carried away completely to some other place, as you carried us."

Back at the little inn—very exhausted, wanting

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dinner badly. Long table, an elderly Belgian Commandant at the head. A fat Belgian, much younger, beside him, complained of the draught from the open window.

"Mollusc!" cried the commandant, springing up and turning the window, so the draught went the other way.

The other men seemed to be railway officials and commercial travellers.

A stout, matronly person brought me some bread and butter and I thanked her as "Madame."

"Mademoiselle," the fat Belgian corrected, and went on to say she never let herself be captured by matrimony.

"Same here," I remarked in rather more elegant French terms.

He gazed at me and said roughly:

"In our country we call such a thing abnormal!"

"Not at all," I replied. "It is marriage that is abnormal. The single life is normal."

A roar of laughter from end to end of the table. And then talk raged up and down. They used terms I did not know, slang, and between the general tumult and strange words, happily I could not follow the argument.

Only the old commandant tried to keep the fat Belgian in some sort of order.

The fat Belgian said an old bachelor was—some unknown word, and drunkard.

The bachelors at table—and there were several

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including the commandant—asked him to define marriage.

He said something about the two sexes which made the old commandant roar.

"Disgusting! Can you, a married man, find no more——"

A Belgian far down the table addressed me.

"Mademoiselle, will you answer me a question?"

"If it is in my power, monsieur. I must avow that much of this talk—I understand not. Speak slowly and ask something simple."

"What is marriage?"

"Marriage is the reunion of two beings, who are not really two, but one being."

Much applause, particularly from the commandant. The fat Belgian took up "*La Vie Normale*," and said some one must confirm my statement.

"The lady has said it," the commandant promptly squashed him. "That is enough. What she says needs no confirming."

Next morning—but one of the loveliest days God ever made. So fresh, so green, so sparkling—delicious.

The old commandant was in the café.

I meant to speak to him, but had no opportunity.

Cottage gardens are full of white lilies, crisp and pure.

Sad to be returning to the city.

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BACK AGAIN.

But the little town looks picturesque. I found Mrs. P. in her blue coif at the other hotel. More lilies on the tables—looking different to the country ones.

Went to B. Camp that afternoon. Had a Talk on the Mutiny at special request. Shan't repeat. Too gruesome. Lovely afternoon. Sat on the edge of the veranda and the men lay on the grass below. They notice the vivid colouring and speak of the bright greenness of the lettuces. The men had nearly all changed. Some of the nicest I have met.

Rather amusing meeting the men returning in the evening—at least out there near the Camp, not near the town. The men out in the country are as different from the town-men as the lilies.

I know by the way they speak when "fu'" that they are glad to have me amongst them.

"Don't you ever say you can't ride a bike, Mother," is very different to a man who has never seen me calling, "'Ullo, Maud! You're slipping. Mind that step!"

Some one seizes the "Maud" man and makes him shut up.

"Evening, Sister," a quiet fellow called out.

A man with him, awfully drunk, said:

"S'isn't Sister. S's Ma! Night, Ma!"

Night, night, you dear one!

Yours,

N.

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July 21*st*.

Must speak of the ambulance seen crawling carefully from the canal, beautifully driven by a young girl—a Fany.

"They have the tenderness," a colonel, just down from the Top, said to me, as we stood to let it pass.

He wanted to talk to a woman so badly that he pretended to know me. How's that for an Englishman?

"Just fancy meeting you here!" he greeted me, offering his hand. "I must tell my wife. She will be pleased."

"Do remember me to her," I said, playing up to him, and taking his hand. "Aren't you glad to be down?"

"Awfully!" he replied deeply.

And then the ambulance passed. I caught the girl's eyes. Full of sympathy and grief. The end was open, and we could see stark forms, bandaged, still and heavy.

The feet of one protruded. They were rusty iron in colour.

"Can it be liquid fire?" I asked the colonel.

"Probably," he replied. "The worst cases come down in canal boats."

But I think it was iodine.

Had a wonderful Sunday at the railway siding.

I joined the Steelbacks—Northamptons—between the lines. We all sat on knapsacks, a man piled up

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two for me. They gave me some of the soldiers' vocabulary.

Jam—Pozzy. Tea—Char. Bread—Rootie. Onions—Piège. Porridge—Burgooe. Gravy—Gippy. Butter—Muckin or Dubbin. Rifle—Bundhook.

Speaking of getting killed, a man said he was religious and another man beside him was a wicked, coarse-speaking fellow. But he was left and the other fellow was taken. Where did I think he was now?

The Life-force in him had found a new expression, I replied. Most of our sins are bound up with the flesh—the sheath for the moment of the Living Spirit. Possibly with the passing out from this state we cast off many of our temptations.

Then was he in no better position than the bad man?

Certainly. Wherever the balanced man went he left a trail of happiness. Wherever the unbalanced man, discord, ugliness, and misery were not only left by him but necessarily clung to him.

Here they interrupted to say, how terribly pressing on a man's nature were the evils of the flesh.

I listened and agreed. But here lies his power. Whatever pain we have to bear, by its very fleshly nature it must pass; whatever temptations the same thing—but the power with which we stand pain and temptation never passes. It is Life-force and ours for ever.

I went over to another batch. A man got up and

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arranged a pack for me; but they were mostly sleeping. I rose to leave them, when suddenly five or six ambulance men surrounded me; and one began at once, speaking of God, and fiercely saying he had finished with Him.

"Do you believe in God?" he asked me.

Another man, with fair moustache, burst out laughing.

"I do not believe in a God who sits aloft like a sort of Father Christmas man and doles out fancies and caprices to people here below. Nor in one who can break His own laws, because some one begs him. I meet heaps of men who seem to think God's there to put a feather-bed between them and the result of their actions. Well, I do not believe that God exists."

The fair-moustached man who had made to go turned back and patted me on the shoulder.

"That's right, Mother. That's the stuff I can listen to! You go on. You give us some more."

"You listen to me," said the first man. "I had a wife and three little children, and never a couple loved each other more than what we did. I was a good man. There's few men as is as good as I was. I went straight. And I was religious too. I was in the Church Army Band. And my wife died. They said to me, God loved her so, 'E took 'er for Himself. Yes, to a place of milk and 'oney. Well, I loathe milk and despise 'oney. Do you think she wants any of them? No, what she wants is to be with her

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children and me. Them children have two good grandmothers. But do you suppose any one could be to them what their mother could a been? What do you think she'd say to me if she were here?"

"She would say, 'I'm not so far from you as you think. I watch over you and the children, and the great force of that love, deathless between us, will bring us again to each other.'"

"She said to me, 'Shall I pray God not to let me die in pine?' And I said to her, 'Yus, you pray, mate. God'll listen to you.' And she did die and in pine! Am I to go on worshippin' that God?"

"No," I said, "you'd better not. He doesn't exist."

"But you do believe in God?"

"Yes," I said, "I do."

"Now you can stop talking and give the lady a chance," one of the others said. He had talked a great deal more, but I've picked out the most salient. "You've told us the God you don't believe in, Ma. Now tell us the God you do!"

"God is Spirit. And how are we little lumps of animated matter to know Spirit? Only by what we've got in ourselves. In three things we, too, are Spirit. Life is Spirit. We can put it out. We can't put it in. We know when it's there or when it's not there. But no man has seen Life with the naked eye at any time. And Love is Spirit. We see its manifestations. The chum we can trust and feel his handclasp. The mother's love that will deny herself to feed the child.

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The lover's love that will pour out life itself to save the loved one. But no man hath seen Love with the naked eye at any time. And Intelligence is Spirit. You know the bright look of the boy that has it. Here are three things that are Spirit in us. And those three things we are by the Force of the Living God. If He were out, we would be out. For in Him we live and move and have our being. Now is this sense? Or am I talking through my hat?"

"No, no, that's sense. Give us some more!" And the light-moustached man patted me again.

But the first man had not finished. They were working on ambulance trains. He told us he was always good to sick men, because people sympathized much more with the wounded than with the sick.

"I'm for the down dog," he said. "I will help the down dog."

Then he put me this poser:

"Supposing I were in a boat what upset with my wife and mother, and a man asked me which I'd save, what ought I to answer? Of course I'd say I'd save both. But suppose I couldn't?"

"Yes," the men asked, gathering round, "which ought a man to love best, his wife or his mother?"

An animated side-quarrel went on as to whether one should love father or mother best; but all settled down to the main issue and listened solemnly for my opinion.

"Love isn't limited like that," I said. "It's

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different. You can't measure it one with another by the inch-tape. With his wife, a man's sense of protection comes in. A man's nothing but a beast if he doesn't feel something of a father towards his wife." Murmurs of approval. "Towards his mother. Well, here in France a man won't even worship God unless he could approach Him through his mother. A mother is—a man's feeling to his mother is—well, it's impossible to put in words——"

"You've done it," the fair-moustached man cried. "You've done it. Don't say another word. We all know what you mean. You've said it."

"Well," said the first man, who thought his own thoughts while other people were talking, "I'll tell you straight out how I'd reply to any man who asked me if I'd save my wife or my mother. I'd knock him down! For he'd no right to ask it."

This broke up the meeting with laughter.

I went along a train where the cattle-trucks were laden with men. They sit at the open door with their legs hanging out.

"Here's Little Mamma come to say, 'Be good to yourselves, boys!'" They laughed and called out that they would.

"Be good to yourselves, especially at night. When you lie down, even on the ground, tell yourself that you are the Child of God, and God is Love. God hasn't made this War. If we'd listened to One He sent two thousand years ago and loved each other as He told us to, we shouldn't be fighting now. But

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we've broken the Law and have to be crucified ourselves. And you men are bearing the Cross, lifting it right off the shoulders of us women and children. And we know it. And we love you for it."

Hand after hand stretched out to grip mine. Strangely enough, the elder men are most moved. Many of them had tears in their eyes.

Then there were sick lads convalescent—also in trucks. To them I read, "'If the Spirit of Him that raised Christ Jesus from the dead dwell in you——'" A hoarse laugh greeted this suggestion from a lad standing up with tired eyes. "'He that raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit—that dwelleth in you.' That's true, laddies. I've proved it myself. It's happening to you."

More handclasps. Sometimes from thin, white, sweaty hands.

Sat in a field with a crowd eating their lunch. One huge, ugly fellow brought his haversack and sat close to me. The sergeant called them to fall in.

"Oh, Mother," he said pathetically, "just as I was gettin' to love yer!"

I had rather unfortunately greeted him with, "Well, the Kaiser will drop dead if ever he gets sight of you!" A whoop of delight all round; but it seemed to please him rather than otherwise.

Later still, in another crowd, a man asked if I thought Jesus could sin.

"A fat lot of use He'd be to us if He couldn't!"

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another called out. "Seeing as we jolly well can."

"I didn't ask you. I asked her. Let her tell us."

"Of course He was tempted and much more than we are. The higher and bigger you grow the greater your temptations. Why, boys, it's worth climbing, if it were only to see our temptations."

"I'm blessed. You are a rum 'un! I never heard any one talk like you before."

"Well, is it the truth?"

"That's what's so rum. Fancy talkin' the truth. It beats all I've ever heard."

Bye-bye, you blessed one.

Yours, wherever you are,

N.

July 20th,
4 a.m., and dark.

Strange to hear the iron, leaden, almost empty sound of distant guns, B—m, B—m, and the near, sweet, old chimes of the ancient clock. Here, trees waving in the wind; quaint old roofs; aged towers; train whistles; feet on the old-world cobbles, and there—— B—m, B—m.

9 a.m

Got back into bed and a bird sang sweetly.

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July 24th, 1917.

DEAR,

After the railway yesterday, I bicycled with Mrs. W—— to her farm. Lovely country, green corn standing high, and always the guns.

"Roaring like lions," she said. "Isn't that one hungry?"

I got badly puffed against a head wind and stopped off at a fine Y.M.C.A. Hut for tea.

Shall not forget the view of undulating hills and waving green corn through their open door, nor the persistent roar of guns.

"They've begun the big drive," a girl said in a slow, matter-of-fact voice. Certainly the British are nerve-soothing.

Rode on afterwards and found the farm.

Big open rooms, windows back and front. Two on to the farmyard, where pigeons roucouloued, cows sometimes mooed, and the big, black dog barked.

Behind, kitchen garden with a few flowers, tall trees, swaying in the breeze, and always the guns.

Mrs. W. told me of an ancient prophecy of the Sologne: "When men fly with wings, ten kings will go to war. The women will begin the harvest, but men will finish it."

Is it to end this autumn?

Many of the English think so. The French do not.

Bicycling home, men stopped me in the Horse

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Hospital village. Wanted to talk. More theological discussion.

A New Zealander said they had been told I said that the world would be a perfect place after the war.

"That's rot!" I remarked. "And I never said it. Men are always asking: 'When will the War be over?' And I reply I don't know. But I do know when all wars will cease, and that is when we spread ourselves properly over this little planet and don't lump ourselves together until there is no room. There are lovely lands for everybody; and when we really make use of the world as we should, why, no little child need ever go hungry, no woman sell herself to live, and no man get up of a morning to try and best his neighbours—and then there will no war. And I'm no Pacifist, boys. Germany has run amuck like a madman—and all decent men are out to hold him down."

The New Zealander aired atheistical opinions with that pride people take in them, and leaned heavily on my bicycle.

"Now tell us what you think of drink," another said. "Just you tell him what you think of a man getting drunk."

"Do you mean to tell me that I am drunk?" he roared—and I let him have the bicycle all to himself.

"No, I do not," I said with dignity. "British soldiers do not get drunk. Especially when they've travelled from the far side of the world and left wife

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and child to take up the cause of the widowed and fatherless."

We all parted good friends. They had told me more than they thought they had.

Ran home easily with the wind at my back.

You blessed one,

Good night.

N.

SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE,
July 25th, 1917.

DEAREST,

Am sleeping in the very dirtiest room I ever occupied in my life.

Happily the homespun sheets are clean. I love the sort of gritty feel of them.

Paper and plaster torn off the walls in great patches. But the yard outside is spick and span. Pointed red-tiled roof. A curious gargoylish beast in wrought iron sprawling from one. Doves flying, and a little girl in the door of the hay-loft with two young kittens clawing at her bodice.

Am surrounded by British Camps and green corn-fields. Came up in the train with Canadians, nurses and officers. Delightful young people.

A Virginian had fruit with which he fed us. It is no fancy. A more gentle humanity does exude from men of the U.S.A.

The people of the Scottish Church Hut took me

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off, we sat on the lawn, had an amusing tea, and a most superior audience rolled up for my Talk.

Amongst the Lottery prizes I had a little game with directions in French, and wondered if they would be mastered. The French interpreter, the only Frenchman among several hundred men, won it. Wasn't that odd ?

Found my Belges of the previous visit at supper.

Madame had told them to behave, and they were properly subdued. Such coffee as they serve in bowls, such wonderful eggs, and the cherries! And I sleep very well in the very dirty room in the clean, rough sheets. The air is sweet and pure. A little girl looks after me.

She stood on the rickety table, fixing the dark curtain, which is hung up nightly on three nails by three rings.

She asked me :

" Madame, what age are you ? "

" What age do you think ? "

" Perhaps forty."

I burst out laughing.

She is twelve herself.

Some fine young officers told me of an impressive procession after Confirmation to the great Calvaries at the cross roads. The priest in his fine robes. The little girls in their white frocks and veils.

They were struck by the complete absence of men. Only women in their great mourning veils and very old men were present.

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Have just talked with the Belgian commandant.

He sprang up and saluted as I passed through the café. We exchanged compliments, he gave me a French paper, and we had a little talk.

"Ah, no," he said in the midst of it, "the French officers do not drink. They are too *fin*."

He went on to say it has always a stunting effect on the intellect.

Danger siren has sounded. They say only an English aeroplane that did not show its signals.

Saw an officer who tells me two thousand American engineers are coming here. He asked me to come and amuse them—and his German prisoners. Presumably the last was a joke.

Fine audience in the Hut. Began with about two hundred men and ended with eight. Told Tales from the Wild West for over an hour.

July 27th.

A fine black cob in an old-fashioned gig, a boy of fourteen driving. Away we went to Z——, past tranquil canals, standing green corn, high trees and little houses with neat, tiny gardens.

The Hut set in a pretty garden, gay nasturtiums tumbling over each other. Pollarded trees along a miniature canal.

Letters and 'phone messages had missed. The Talk never been announced. So we drove back through the lovely evening.

Passing a goat, my young coachman remarked:

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"The English soldiers love goats."

"They love all animals," I said.

"Yes, they love animals and flowers and children, and they are generous."

He was driving a French soldier back to rejoin after being wounded, and an English soldier gave him a packet of cigarettes and some chocolate.

All the women, too, give them a good character.

"There is nothing to say against them!"

My host asked if it were true that I talked to English soldiers every evening in English for an hour?

"Bien difficile, ça!" he remarked.

He thinks I am wholly French!

July 28*th.*

Back in the train with officers from the Front and two little French girls with their maid—or rather big and very English-looking girls, thirteen and fourteen. Their mother is English.

The men were talking of the new kind of gas the Boches send over in bombs. They mix them with others, that they may think they are duds. Duds are bombs that strike dead and bury themselves without exploding.

One wore his gas-mark four hours without an instant's removal. The new gas agonizes the eyes when they shut them, so they cannot sleep. It is all right so long as they keep them wide open. Their chests are sore with burning spots inside.

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They asked the doctor what to expect. And he, being an optimist, replied:

"I don't think it can be very bad or you would be dead by now."

I offered five francs to any one who could see a German prisoner working. This enlivened them all. Much poking out of the windows.

But I left the train with the five francs in my pocket.

Went to French Hospital as soon as I got in.

Three men, lying side by side, one leg between them. And that one swathed from thigh to foot and lying in an open wire cradle. They were sailors. Twenty-five in a mine-sweeper. All blown up, only five saved.

One had a little boy sitting where his legs ought to have been. He was feeding the little chap with chocolate and wiping his mouth.

"It is your son?"

"Mais non, madame! He comes to visit me."

Such handsome fellows. How do they get the courage to be so serene?

Yours, back in the round room,

N.

Next Day.

DEAR,

Just in from another jolly day at the railway. Sat three hours with the Dorsets in the

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field. Told them then I must leave them, for I had said every word that I knew.

"Then begin at the beginning, Mamma, and say it all over again."

The German prisoners were lazier than ever. The only person working was the English sergeant, trying to get them to move. He perspired from every pore.

Rather than lift a finger they let the Libby fall off the rollers and the boxes split up.

One lusty lout near us was so lazy, I turned while sitting among the boys and called:

"Oh, don't exert yourself like that! It makes me tired to watch you!"

Our men yelled with laughter. He looked round very cross. The perspiring sergeant waved his little cane at him and for quite five minutes he worked. He did really.

Later our men on the grass called to them as they rested on the boxes:

"Sing us that 'Hymn of Hate'!"

"Give us 'Deutschland über Alles'!"

One replied:

"'England über Alles'!"

"Is this the softest job you ever slipped into?"

And the only term of disgust our men give them is:

"Mercy, *Kamarad.*"

Down at the truck-doors to see the boys off. Loving greetings as we part.

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"Good-bye, Ma! Au revoir, Mother! Mummie, bye-bye!"

Sunday Morning.

Storm and cannons. Firing out to sea, I think. The mingling of sound impressive and curious.

The British are moving the last inhabitants from parts of Flanders. Some of them are staying in this hotel—very angry at being moved. A fine, white-moustached man, and a very old lady, and a strong-looking, angry, youngish woman. All well-to-do people.

Have found a small restaurant where they give astonishingly good nourishing food for three francs. It is marked Out of Bounds, and I was given a long rigmarole of some unjust tale told of them and a girl by some Belgian soldier. Don't know if I ought to patronize them; but the cat and dog are so loving and beautiful.

Gave a talk on Canada in a dining-shed. An Australian summed up very truly by saying:

"If a man can climb, he'll go up quicker and get further than in the old country. But if he's going down he'd better stay where he is; for he would fall faster and break himself worse."

But the very best evening of all at B. Camp. They were a splendid set of men.

Pouring with rain. Thought they'd be dull. So drove up in a fly with a Lottery.

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The gramophone had been mended. I suggested making a Presentation. A fine little ceremony, reading letters from American women: "Give our love to the splendid Tommies, and tell them we feel for all they go through and admire them for it."

Then Lottery and ghost stories. But it is vain to find words to tell you what a manly set of men they were. The ghost stories were enhanced by appropriate punctuations from the penny whistle.

And the rain poured. And the silence was great and impressive. And their handclasps true.

I left the fly standing in a bit of road between two rivers; but went out to find the poor old horse standing in one lake.

Hear the new gas is awful. Fifteen hundred Canadians down with it. It penetrates the skin, and seems to pull out the eyeballs.

Two famous Belgian surgeons spend their spare time farming, and in preserving the famous breed of Flemish cows. Huge, red beasts, with a sort of white, smeary face. Have been asked to visit the Belgian Club by an Englishwoman who gave it them.

Yours ever,

N.

P.S.—She has given me an account as she received it from an old Belgian gentleman of the Declaration of War in the Belgian Senate.

The King came to the waiting House, walked to his place, and standing said: "Gentlemen, the

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Germans are over our Frontier. We shall withstand them."

"The most eloquent speech ever uttered," he said. "Tears stood in every eye. We knew the cost—but not a dissentient sound was heard."

It was a terrible moment.

"Tears poured down my cheeks," he finished. "As I went for the last time to my motor to return to a home that soon would not exist."

And it was little pleasure-loving Belgium that made this mighty sacrifice.

My Dear,

Have just been to the Belgian Club, given them from funds collected by the English lady. The major in control took me over it. Long tables with forms across the great hall. Some six hundred can sit down at once, served by seventeen orderlies. Beef and potatoes, a pot of beer and bread and butter for one franc. The food looked awfully appetizing. An English lady sells fruit, tobacco, etc., from a little stall. The chapel, shut off at the end, every Sunday morning is open, with the hall turned into a church. Handsome little stage-scenery at the other end, painted by the soldiers. Away over the grounds another long and large annexe, given by Americans and worthy of them. Outer office, lending library, reading-room, lecture-room. Kitchen annexe for making tea for the

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officers' room. Most pretty. Little white chairs and tables, piano placed slantwise, writing-tables, etc. A Salle d'Armes beyond that, and beyond again baths and douches. Every partition can come out and slide in elsewhere.

They gave me this poem by Commandant Damaras:

"Belge, sois fier! Glorieuse est la tâche
Que t'imposa le respect de ta foi.
Quand le Germain te dit: Peuple, sois lâche!
Il vit, dressé pour le braver, ton Roi.
A ses côtés, bondissant sous l'injure
La rage au cœur, du défi plein les yeux,
Tu te rangeas pour laver la souillure,
Garder intact le renom des aieux.

(*Refrain*)

Belge, quand tu combats, c'est pour ceux qui, là-bas
Savent, dans leur souffrance, ce que peut ta vaillance!
Comme jadis, sois le peuple indompté
Venge ton Roi, les Tiens, la Liberté!

Belge, sois fier! Flottant sur la bataille,
Ton vieux drapeau, tout large déployé,
A vu passer l'ouragan de mitraille,
Sans qu'un frisson de crainte l'ait frôlé!
Debout toujours, il n'a pas une tache;
A Liége il fut, comme il est à l'Yser,
L'affront cinglant, tel un coup de cravache,
L'Orgeuil dément du sinistre Kaiser!

(*au refrain*)

Belge, sois fier, sois fier de ceux qui pleurent;
Ceux dont les Huns font un peuple martyr . . .
Ils ont souffert, et pourtant ils demeurent
Vibrants d'espoir, de foi dans l'avenir!

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Que des bandits, trafiquent, en infâmes,
De tes enfants, de tes femmes, des vieux;
Ils ont les corps, ils n'auront pas les âmes
De ceux qui croient aux demains glorieux."
(*au refrain*)

How is this for an everlasting uplift?

Yours,

N.

August 7th, 1917.

Perfectly frightful weather. The mud and squelch of camps must be seen to be believed. Stood out on the tracks under the open trucks at the railway siding and talked with the men. Jolly fine they are. I hailed them with:

"Keeping glad here?"

"Quite glad, thank you, Mamma!"

Some fine gunners in one truck. Wild fellow in the next called out:

"Come here, my dear! Talk to us, mudder-moiselle."

"Don't call me 'My dear,' or 'Muddermoiselle,'" I said. "Call me 'Mamma.'"

Their talk was so fierce, twice I said:

"No place for Little Mamma."

But they called me back.

One said Canada had given him no opportunities but to go to jail. He had done without women for eighteen months, and was free of them for ever.

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They were from Messines and said they worked the guns just like the Cinema. Twelve hours on and twelve hours off. Two shifts. If they got a minute they lay down and slept. I gave them booklets, with the dedication:

> "To the Well-beloved
> Who counting not their lives dear unto them
> Have willingly consecrated themselves
> To the Defence of Home and Empire."

The wild boy handed them. Each man wanted one, and feeling a little out of his *métier* he relieved himself while giving them by droning:

"D—rly b'loved br'thrn, Scpture moveth us sndry plces. . . ."

The train moved on, he caught my hand and nearly dragged me off with them.

"Tell you what, Ma!" he bawled. "You're a good sport!" A station policeman was standing by, and when I recovered balance said:

"'E don't mean no 'arm, Mamma. Don't take no notice!"

Take no notice! I was pleased past words.

Next time I was down it was wetter than ever and bitterly cold. Standing on the dismal tracks in oil-skins with a little crowd who were looking at Chinamen passing and other things, a voice called from the midst:

"Where's Mamma? Has she gone away?"

But was beaten out at last by the weather and went and sat with officers inside. One showed me

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his gas-mask with a long snake-like curling thing that runs into a bag to puff in good air.

We told stories. Heard these of London clubs.

A man stepped on a bishop's toe as he was coming out. The bishop nearly fell down and sat on the bench to recover. He apologized profusely for hurting him.

"It isn't that," said the bishop. "But you're the first man who's ever spoken to me, though I've been coming here for thirty years."

Another of a man leaving the club. The hall-porter helped him on with his coat, he turned back and said:

"By the by you'd better remove Mr. So-and-So from the smoking-room."

"Why, sir, you don't—you don't mean that he's inebriated?"

"No. But he's been dead about half an hour."

Let's keep alive while we can.

Yours,

N.

A few days later.

DEAREST,

Three Australians told me that seven hundred civilians, nearly all women and children, have been poisoned by the new gas at A——. They were led to the station with their eyes bandaged.

"And talk about sending off cattle," one said.

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"The way they were handled at the station and shoved into cattle-trucks——"

So it was wise to move them on, and I look at the old lady sitting upright and wordless in the hall, and I wonder if she knows.

They are sending these gas-shells as far in as H——.

"They've just gone wild. They don't know where to hit nor what to do. They know we mean to have 'em."

Sitting on the cinder-track at the railway siding, a man put his finger on the weak point in Land Settlement Schemes.

"They put too much on the individual," he said.

Another great evening at B. Camp. The same fine lot of men were there. One had written the promised letter to the States. Here is a copy.

DEAR MISS M.,

Last Wednesday, together with numerous other chums and members of other units, I had a very pleasant surprise.

We heard a voice so different to that which usually rang in our ears—heads popped up—games stopped and letter-writing ceased. Miss B. announced herself, and told us she had come to spend a short time with us and to distribute prizes we should win and also we were going to have a phonograph.

However, I would rather explain to you in a

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practical manner than endeavour to do so by correspondence, but I feel sure you would accept all our thanks and appreciation without the slightest hesitation, had you been near enough to hear the warm approval when we knew that you had been the generous donor of the beautiful phonograph.

Of course to keep up Tommy's reputation we had to have a try at it, and I can assure you all enjoyed the music, and others that arrive at this Camp will also have this added pleasure.

In conclusion I would explain that most members of our Corps have seen the continuous service of twenty-eight months in France, and all the time (except when on furlough) has been spent in the shelled area. We try and make the best of our conditions, although hearing from such kind people as yourself really brightens things up.

If we never had huts to go to and receive a welcome, a good word in season and many another kindness, undoubtedly we should not be so happy.

We are awaiting to go up the line again having been here for five days, and unfortunately I cannot give you an address.

Should you care to acknowledge my humble attempt to render thanks for a kind action will you kindly write me to address I have quoted on this letter and your communication will be re-directed.

Yours truly,

F. B.

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Great stroke of luck—they turned up at the railway on Tuesday. Mercifully it was not raining, though the field too wet to use. They marched in with those awful packs on their backs. They said, when we were warned of a shunting engine, they hoped it would get the officer who marched them down. He had never called a halt to loosen packs.

"Tears would be rolling down my cheeks if I carried one over the station," I said.

"Our tears roll all right, Ma. Mine roll down my back into my boots."

"Boys, it goes to Mamma's heart."

"And it goes to our backs, old dear."

These are good days to be a woman.

Bye-bye, beloved,

N.

P.S.—Here are some of the likes they sing to the tune of "The Church's One Foundation."

"We are Fred Carnot's Navy,
We are the R.N.D.
We cannot fight, we cannot shoot,
No earthly use are we.
But when we get to Berlin
The Kaiser he will shout
'Hoch! Hoch! Mein Gott,
What a blooming fine lot
Are the gallant R.N.D.'"

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SCRIBBLING IN MY ROOM.

Here it is raining again. And my day at B. Camp. Though what one thinks of is the Front, and the way it holds things up there. The new gas is frightful. Men talking to Miss K. last night said that big men sob with it like children that can't stop. They are afraid it is blinding them. Don't know yet.

An officer in Mrs. W.'s Hut told us of going in to rush ground between trenches one thousand strong and coming out thirty-five. He was taking a darling little puppy to the Front, Brindle. Her mother had killed over a thousand rats in the trenches. He hated the rats worse than shells, running over one's face at night.

Met a sapper, who blew up my bicycle tyre. He told me of shelling at H——.

He had just bought oranges when a shell took the house. He rushed back, his handkerchief over his face to protect him against flying dust and bits, for he knew a woman and three young girls were there.

He found the woman, shaking violently, picked her up and carried her out. He was covered with blood. Part of her neck was blown away.

He went again to look for the three girls, about seventeen, fifteen and twelve years old. He could not find them; started up the street and found their arms and legs.

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"That's not war," he said. "What had they done?"

He was so shaken that instead of returning to the Front he had been sent down here for a few days.

And flowers are blooming and little waves lapping.

And how courageous, how unthinking of self these men are! Gentle and simple.

Best love,

Yours,

N.

MORE ACTIVE SERVICE,

August 13th, 1917.

DEAR,

Once more in the train. This time going farther away from the Lines.

Several men in the carriage—all military, of course. A man from India, full of the Prophecies, and the Lost Tribes.

The country lovely. Waving corn. Yellow now. Undulating hills. Blasting sounded as we passed some quarries. All three officers from the Front started violently. A chaplain and I did not. Curious that. I told some officers at S. about it, and they said:

"So they would."

Arrived, mounted bicycle and went over beautiful open country, amid cornfields, sharp downhill, under railway arch, round corner, arrived in the Vallée Heureuse.

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Lovely stream, big, smooth, grey stones, water-cress, trees; on till the Camp began—and finally the Hut. My voice brought the ladies up the passage from the counter.

"But how early you are!" The train was on time.

We had a jolly little meal, sitting round a small table outside the open door. Nut-trees divided us from a tiny lawn, where the last batch of sergeants played Badminton, with battledores and shuttlecocks of their own making. We were right in the Camp. The result on the men of these ladies in their midst is most striking. They are the gentlest mannered quarry-men. All bad words cease, till about the middle of the Camp. And the three women live together in perfect amity.

In the Hut, they leave the big door at the end ajar, and all the time one sees the great cross and a glimpse of the purple altar.

Tables stood about with a difference. Flowers in quantities. A sweet and subtle influence is over the whole place.

Miss S. took me up the village in the afternoon, and showed me my billet, but was called away. Stores had arrived, a messenger told her. So I went on alone, into the exquisitely clean house, up the wooden stairs that led from the kitchen, over a boarded space, and into a spotless room. I wish I had power to depict the clear air and sunshine, transforming trees, corn and quarries into places of delight here in France.

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I lay on the bed, meaning to stay there a minute, and slept an hour. Went down to find Miss B. had come. She took me up the village to buy vegetables, and in to a farm and introduced me to Madame. The wide dark passage was papered like white and blue tiles. Out into the yard, where nut-trees, a huge walnut and a tall poplar stood. Through the little gate to the walled garden and down the little path between neat rows of lettuce, cabbage, French beans and sorrel. Pear-shaped pears ripening on the walls.

Madame's son had just returned to the Front. A few tears fell. In the cool, wide room, sparsely furnished, she showed us his photo. A fine, keen face.

"Never for the café," she murmured. "Never for the playing around, wasting his time. Always for the farm, the garden, and sitting there to make accounts. May the good God preserve him!"

She gave us currant wine and said on his return she would be making a fine tart—a tart of the country. She would make it, and the baker would bake it, and it would be filled with picked fruit, and she must send a piece to Mademoiselle that all might be eating the same food—when her son came home!

Away to another farm for eggs. We crossed the big yard, full of pigs and ducks, and entered the big kitchen. Real tiles, blue and white, furnished the big fireplace. A beautiful old brass crucifix stood on the little bureau. Miss P. put half a dozen lovely

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brown eggs in each pocket of her overall, and we came home by the running stream, the big, grey stones and the trees.

At seven o'clock the men assembled. Mr. W. a perfectly delightful boy, the chaplain, turned up. He has been at the Front. The big doors were closed. Their new platform stood before them. Never have I had a better audience. They all looked queer when I said the big white donkeys at Khartoum stood from nine to thirteen feet. I found out what I was saying, and corrected to hands. Well might the orderly next day remark:

"Yon was a fine lecture last night, and maybe half of it true!" He added: "But best of all is herself—she's a Woman."

Supper just inside the open door—a happy, scramble meal—then home through the dark valley to bed.

Blasting goes on at eleven o'clock. The noise sounds like a dead thud compared with the more vivid sting of guns, dying away, too, very quickly.

I hung my black skirt up over the window, for the quarry is brightly lit, and slept till Madame brought in my breakfast, coffee and egg.

Up and out into the morning freshness.

White butterflies chasing each other among the little rough bushes up the slope, and two small children chasing each other like the white butterflies. A little boy of three there too, Madame's nephew, "*petit orphelin de guerre.*"

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We returned another way, seeing more of the valley, where it dipped away under its grey cliffs, and little red-roofed houses.

Yes, la Vallée Heureuse with every single man gone from his home, and strangers, exiles, aching with homelessness, living quietly, soberly amongst them.

We went into the lovely property of the Mayor's nephew. The previous evening before the Talk, Miss F. had taken me through a little wood, high trees and low nut-trees, into a lovely hayfield, where we sat on cocks, looking at one of the noblest oak-trees I ever saw. Both the Mayor and his nephew allow them free access to their places. I urged them to call. They were waiting, thinking like England, the resident called first, and probably they will have a weekly invitation to tea. They go up once a week now to the officers' mess and play tennis.

Back at the Hut, selling and cooking. Eating our dinner, merry talk around the door. Coffee and cigarettes, till I suddenly remembered my train.

My bicycle had had its own adventures. Mrs. K. rode in to W. the evening I arrived, punctured, and walked the eight miles home.

A soldier whose acquaintance I made the previous evening offered to mend it. After my Talk I had fallen into conversation with him.

He said how true it is that only far within a man can hold converse with God.

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"How sweet it is, when one finds the way," he added.

He believes in telepathy and seeks his wife in just the same way; far within, and she wrote and told him: "Often at bedtime, I feel you are near me."

Miss P. walked with me under the trees, past the stream and the grey stones.

I bought a safety pin for my skirt in the little shop, bade her good-bye, climbed the hill, and left beneath me the Happy Valley.

Yours always,

N.

BACK AGAIN.

No French class. No one there. Out in the streets, met two of my scholars who asked for it next week. And then some American soldiers. They were in the Square. I asked them what they thought of France.

"Why, it's like a picture show for us," one said. "We've got nothing like those old towers"—he pointed to them—"from end to end of the States."

They gathered round me, said they were only down in small detachments for a few days to get their gas-masks. I asked what they would do with the Germans.

"We'll give them the best that is in us," they replied simply.

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August 15th, 1917.

DEAR,

And up at B. Camp I met the Americans again. Some eight or ten of them in the Hut. All very subdued. Company manners. However, things soon brisked up. An American and a New Zealand sergeant made friends and sat together on a bench by the door. The piano was soon going, and the bones. I recited, and presently they were dancing. One holds the other's shoulders, his partner holds the waist. Americans danced together and British.

"I can't call you 'son,'" I said to an American; "you don't call me 'Mamma.'"

"I couldn't call you that, lady," he said, as if he found it too familiar.

An Englishman, thinking I would be hurt, looked up from his writing and remarked:

"We aren't going to let them have you for their Little Mamma."

I called for a moment's silence before leaving, and spoke of each man having a mother far away in different lands, perhaps gone to a country even farther, and how each mother is sending prayer for her son to one Heavenly Father.

"Boys, think of her to-night as you lie down to sleep. Gather with all you love under the protection of the Father, who loves you all."

They were dancing when I left.

A happy visit to Hospital. Two men were badly

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hurt. Such a dear boy—an ambulance-man, wounded—good to them both. It was beautiful to see him caring for them.

"Chummie wants the gramophone," he said, and carried it up to him.

Mr. P. told me of helping the wounded at the Front. A man, heavily bandaged, came up for a bowl of tea, but went back to a man strapped in his stretcher.

"We're going to have tea, mate," he said. "I'm just waiting till you have yours, so we can have it together." This with his mouth parching.

I had tea with them at the far end, where the men were better, and mostly sitting about. Fine white bread and jam—rootie and pozzy. Much amusing talk.

A man was told by his mother:

"Always keep near the colonel, dear, and then you won't be hurt."

It came off sometimes. Sometimes it very much did not. And of another man who won a medal for twice creeping up close to the Boches trenches, listening, and, as he understood German, bringing back information. His mother wrote to say how proud she was of him; but added, "Never do it again, dearie."

They are unaccustomed to beds.

"I had to get up in the middle of my first night here to rest," a man told us.

They ask about the French word "Boche." What does it mean?

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Nothing but an old frontier word "Alleboche," instead of "Allemand," for German. I hear with joy the Germans hate it.

"And then what's this word 'Huns'? That's what they call themselves."

"Call themselves?"

"Yes, it's written on their belts."

"On their belts?"

A man in the next bed burst out laughing. "'*Gott mit uns*,'" he cried. "That's what's written on their belts. 'Gott mit uns.'"

"Well, *uns*—ain't that *huns?*"

We are awfully merry in hospital.

Sitting by a Canadian in the next ward was a man seeking news of the Missing. He showed me his book. The names crossed out where information had been procured.

With a mind full of the lost wives and little children of the French and Belgian soldiers, and of societies that seek them, I remarked:

"But the English are not missing?"

"Not missing?" he exclaimed. "Look at this book full of names."

"Why, yes. The soldiers, of course."

Outside the next tent a little pale lad lay with a cradle over his leg. The big fellows round were telling me he ought to go back to Blighty. He thought they were making too much of him. He looked up at me and said weakly:

"I don't want to go back to Blighty!"

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Suddenly I choked.

Blighty! How they adore you.

Yours as ever,

N.

A.P.O. X.,
B.E.F.,
FRANCE,
Aug. 20*th*, 1917.

DEAR,

On the way to the —— Hut to give a Lecture near the old Windmill on the hill I had a chat with ten *poilus*. Several had lost their wives and children in invaded country. One had heard nothing of them ever since War began until a few weeks ago, when he heard from his sister, who escaped —his first news.

They tried rather painfully to be jovial. One fellow in an effort to enliven us said the *sage-femme*, on the birth of his little daughter, remarked that she resembled him. "That is the more queer," he said, "since I have only the honour to be the uncle."

I told them English soldiers did not tell me such stories.

"We are more natural, that is all," he said, and added: "But we are only vulgar *poilus*."

"Not vulgar," I said. "No Frenchman is vulgar. He leaves that to the Boche. The Frenchman is too fine, his mind too quick, his intelligence too sympathetic—— "

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He interposed:

"Then tell us, madame. It has really injured you—you feel worse than before you heard the unfortunate remark?"

"No," I replied, "I do not. It has not hurt me. It is too remote to hurt me, even if I believed it—which I do not. But it has hurt you. You might have used this five minutes to rise to that fine, higher self you doubtless possess and that it would have given all of us great pleasure to meet."

Warmed by this, they shook hands. I was crossing fields and skirting woods to avoid another high wind, after a morning at the siding. They did not know my way, having only come from the Front the previous day. A few yards farther I met two Australians, and inquired of them.

Had a large and sympathetic audience in the big Hut among the fields. A good platform and men ranged on chairs in silence to listen to my talk on Khartoum.

They sang, "Abide with me."

Moving to hear the gruff voices softening to the hymns of their childhood.

Every man has a religion within his belief—or his unbelief. It is Home.

Another evening, climbing this hill from a farther Hut, I stopped at the top for breath, and then to listen, for "Sun of my Soul" was pouring out into the quiet evening air.

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Many men, Australians among them, sat on the bank to listen.

We observed silence.

"We come up here and sit outside," a man remarked at the close. "I'm not a praying man myself; but it do seem good and a bit of home to hear it."

Days are already shortening. Night falls before I can reach the town.

Bye-bye, be good,

Yours,

N.

Aug. 22*nd*, 1917.

DEAR,

The railway siding is really the best of all, and the dear little brown Hut behind the palings. Sunflowers are blooming now among the flags in the ditch, dividing it from the field.

The other day an old soldier was using language, tucked in the back of a cattle-truck. The others told him to hush, for a lady was there. Never believing, he only turned the flow on them. They dragged him forward, and he nearly fell over when he saw me. He was upset. I said I thought his language very gentlemanly—that failed to comfort him. Then that I had learnt nothing new. He brightened.

"There's strong language," he remarked. "And obscene language. I don't think you'll ever hear the last from the soldiers."

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I hardly ever hear any language at all, though one day a sergeant giving the order to "Fall in," hurried up the men, saying:

"Gor blime me, this 'ere business ain't a put-up job for a bloody picture-show."

We had a jolly French lesson in the field. They learn to pronounce the vowels correctly at the top of their voices. It is wonderful how it loosens their tongues.

"What's 'two kippers and an egg,' Ma?" or "What's 'bloaters for three'?"

I pretend to be a shopwoman, and they come to buy. I had to turn them all down, for no one said, "*Bonjour, madame,*" and "*S'il vous plaît.*"

A boy said:

"Now look 'ere, mates, we have to play civil, and say 'Civil play.'"

Later in the afternoon we had a hot argument on the lines with men returning to the Front.

A Canadian said even unbelievers at the last called on God. He had heard them.

A man said that was miserable cringing and began talking about Church.

The Canadian said very coolly to him:

"I wasn't talking about ministers; but a man's own self and how he feels."

The man burst in again:

"We've done with believing a thing because Father said, and his father said. We don't want no standing up to the left, nor facing the right because

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they done it two thousand four hundred and sixty-five years and two months ago. I told that white-faced bloke the vicar of St. —— last time I was home, it were no use whining any more to me. We want something we can *be*—not something we have to sit and listen about."

But they ceased to wrangle amongst themselves and gave close attention as I read, "Stronger is he that is in you than he that is of the world."

The Liverpool Scottish and King's Own gave a fine Concert from a truck. They had a capital leader and were in fine voice. "Old King Cole," "Who killed Cock Robin?" and a song, new to me, "The Funeral Club." Good fun that.

Some of them told me they had a sack of potato seed in the corner of a truck when they left Havre, and they were able to boil the potatoes grown from them by the time they reached the Front.

Mrs. W. in the Hut had seen the first contingent of the Woman's Army march through the town, and spoke about it to the policeman. He asked if they carried bayonets.

"Yes, their tongues," she replied.

He doubled up with laughter.

Went to see the men at a Labour Camp. Had tried getting them, through the officers, in their dining-room. Poor success. So on a wet evening tried the back door, instead of the front, and was politely invited to shelter in the wash-house.

"Come and talk to us in the wash-house," said

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a man amid soapsuds above a zinc bath, "and we'll listen. Come and talk to us in the public-house, and we'd rather drink."

A man asked me about Canada, said he wanted to take the White Angel there after the War. He spoke of her health, the climate and so on. Then presently said he was not married. It was irresistible. We all joined in the laugh.

And the evening finished pleasantly with meeting some fine young fellows, officers, at dinner. It was past nine o'clock. They were late too—only just down from the Front.

They had stood five days and six nights up to their arm-pits in water. One boy had been over the Top seven times without being touched. The working parties who take provisions up, etc., and have to cross the open have far less chance than the fighting men in the trenches. Men volunteered to go with him, his luck was so well known. He kept them from running about. Like traffic, stay where you are. One only increases the risk by running wild. Men, after terribly long hours, pull up a sandbag for their heads and drop asleep, still standing in the wet.

He let me try his gas-mask. The oxygen is delicious. I did not pinch the clipper on my nose, which they say is painful.

The interpreter, a Belgian, told me the sound of guns carries like ducks and drakes. Five miles back you may possibly hear nothing. Twenty miles you do.

Coming back from the Front in a lorry he had got

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twelve miles back and thought himself safe, when a bomb exploded ten feet from him.

The boy was with three sergeants in a shell-hole when all three were killed by a bomb. He was untouched. Another time, returning in the dark with men and another officer, he missed the officer and went back. He thought of ordering stretcher-bearers, and took them with him. He found him with a hole in his side as large as his fist, and brought him out.

They say you can tell the shell or shot that's for you. One of them travels about two miles and hits before you hear it. Shells going away have a different sound to those that are coming. They hiss as they come.

Our men jump up and cry when an attack begins: "Come and look at the fireworks."

The horses have gas-masks. The cows die. Children are living underground in dug-outs, and have never seen the light of day in villages lately taken from the Germans. Women are kept there. Male babies sent back to Germany.

Walking back to the hotel, the boy told me how the soldiers cry when hit:

"'My God, I'm stuck.'"

"People may call it blasphemy," he added, "I call it religion."

Bye-bye, my best one,

Yours always,

N.

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Sept. 5th, 1917.

My dear One,

Thank goodness the weather has changed at last. After cyclones, rainstorms and cold—summer again and a glorious moon.

Mr. M. came to the town and motored me out to the Horses' Hospital Camp, telling me, what I did not know before, that the big Hut had been put up with the funds I had brought back from my speaking Tour in the States.

It was early when I arrived. The Hut was closed. I saw the major in command moving among the horses. Had a little chat and he sent me up to the officers' mess, where I found some boys playing tennis on a lovely little lawn, set among cornfields, gay gardens before their wooden mess-rooms. The pat of balls sounded good. We went in to tea and they made me an Honorary Member of the Mess. Much fun and speechifying.

On the way down to the Hut, a corporal ran after me and invited me to see a horse-bath. They were pulling a big black horse down the slide into a narrow tank full of antiseptic water. Ears back, nostrils straining, terrified, he threw himself down. They comforted him. A man called him "Mate." They dashed a bucket of water over his head. He scrambled up and they roped him in. Great splashing, and he came out at the far end very proud and pleased with himself.

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The corporal was pleased too. Said he couldn't have him with the others with the state of his skin, but seemed to think the bath would set it right. He showed me the huge steel don't-know-what-they-are-called where they clean the rugs and equipments brought down on the horses from the Front. And then the ambulance cart for horses. Rather like a very narrow bathing machine, slanting inwards towards the top and heavily padded up the sides.

I had some usual difficulties in the Hut about seeing the men; but managed to have a pleasant time with those there.

One was writing to his little niece. I told him to say he couldn't write for a lady kept chatting beside him. He brightened wonderfully.

"So I will," he said. "That'll fill it up."

A man had lost his wife and couldn't get home in time to see her. Another had lost wife and two young children in a Zeppelin raid.

"We sleep in the same tent," a man told me. "Often I wakens and hears him sobbing when he thinks we are all sleeping."

Bicycled back by an evening glow. Sat by French officers, Chasseurs Alpins, at dinner. The one next me was from the invaded country. His father's house—his father and sister living there—had been burnt to the ground by the Boches. His cousin had been shot in front of his house and his son, a boy of sixteen, bayoneted so badly, gashed in his side, that in a few hours he died of his wounds. His wife and

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sister were on their knees two hours imploring mercy. Another cousin of sixteen, a girl, had disappeared.

What would the British be, if this were their history?

As I stood at the desk, gossiping with Madame and paying for my dinner, lights went out.

Another raid.

We had one the previous evening, Sunday, and I had watched from my balcony.

Saw the little lights twinkle out in the sky and fade into puffs of smoke in the clear light of the big bright moon.

Our guns were busy. One sounds just like two yards of silk being sharply split—silk, not cotton. I told the boys so on the lawn at the Mess that afternoon, and they laughed, for it describes it. The bombs were pretty distant.

However, to return to Monday.

I stopped to talk to a soldier on the way back. Everything was lit by the great big moon.

He told me the red lights of travelling rockets were ours, thrown to find the aeroplanes. Went on to my balcony, watched the great search-lights travelling round, crossing, and criss-crossing. Went to bed.

Crash-sh! Crash-sh-sh-ash!

The whole room shook and swayed.

I ran to the balcony.

A huge bouquet of red sparks and flames sprang high into the sky, followed by a black mass, thick

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and solid, of flying dust and masonry. A good moment, thought I, to see what's going on in the *cave*.

Seized my dressing-gown, slipped into it, and trotted downstairs. I found two girls and some young officers in the cellar. It was very cold, though one of the officers gave me a coat, and awfully dull, so I went upstairs.

Passing the hall, I heard them speak of an Incendiary. Upstairs the bombs began again. I dressed, went down, and among some people at the door.

I moved out.

Several people were standing at the corner. I had a distinct feeling of objection to that corner. Walked wide to avoid it, remarked I was going to see the fire, and went on briskly. An English officer joined me.

The fire gleamed, rearing high into the sky over the canal bridge and behind the farther park.

Some French people said the Town Hall had been hit. An ugly new building, very Boche in design. Happily not the beautiful old Tower where the clock rings out peacefully among guns and bombs.

We could not see it in the dark, but walked among a snow of shivered glass. We went on till round by the theatre we found a house blazing on the Boulevard. Flame and coloured smoke poured up into the sky. Flames bulged from the middle windows. The little top attics and chimney stacks stood out stark and black from the blaze.

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A few policemen stood about. A weeny little old engine was brought up on something like a truck. A hose was hoisted against the house, and, at last, a thin little jet of water rose.

"That's good-bye to hot water for us this week. The last drop in the town."

And it was. Next morning Alys told me it was *inutile* to *sonner*. No water.

We stood watching till the bombs began again with heavy crash. People ran in all directions. German aeroplanes were doubtless guided by the fire.

Captain M. wished he had on his tin hat.

"Your head is a very small thing for a bomb to find," I remarked consolingly.

But the men roared with laughter when I told them in Hospital next day and seemed to think it was far from kind.

We heard a barge had been hit. Three men on board, not touched, and time to get off before it sank.

We crossed the bridge, and coming to the hotel found the plate-glass windows hit and smashed. Pieces torn off the front. A bomb had fallen close by and shrapnel burst, just where the little knot of people had been standing. Happily they had moved away. Captain M. found me some pieces of shrapnel. We went over and looked at the hole in the ground. A young officer joined us. He had been wounded, hit in the shin by a piece of shrapnel flying by the newspaper kiosk. He had it bound up at the

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fire-station and would not be dissuaded from walking back to B. Camp.

It was past midnight and I went to bed. Guns were still going. I fell asleep and heard next day it went on till past two o'clock. Chinese had been wounded and killed. Many German prisoners killed. Nine men wounded in the docks.

Mr. M. standing in his window in the old square saw a man in the open fall flat upon his face. He thought he had been done out; but, five minutes later, he got up and walked away. Officers tell me this is the safe thing to do; for the shrapnel bursts and objects fly a few feet, probably three, above the ground.

One of my windows has been shivered. I much doubt if it will be mended.

We had another raid last night, and I went into the cellar for half an hour. Our small boy, Jean, who is the mainstay and prop of the house, always gay, always willing, was there with his apron round his middle, seated amongst the maids. He greeted me joyously.

"Ah, Jean," I said, "it is well that you, at least, are too young to be away in the trenches and are here to protect us."

"Yes," he said. "I am here for the moment, but I look to being soldier and in the thick of the combat in only a few years."

"What? You make the War last that long?" the maids exclaimed, laughing.

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It is well to keep up heart in a raid, and it really is extraordinarily exciting and stimulating. It is for the mothers of little children to be afraid. Poor Alys has her little girl at the far side of the town. That is terrible.

Bless you. Good night,

N.

Sunday Evening.

DEAR,

Have just spoken to a big Red-cap. They are mostly London policemen, men of experience. He agreed when I said how quiet and well-behaved the little city is.

"There is no crime," he said. "Of course we have to hand the soldiers over from time to time for Military Offences; but, after all, they are only schoolboy misdemeanours. Staying out too late, or sometimes for drink."

I do not know if the French or English—probably both—are handling problems better than they were at Marseilles early in the War. There the open traffic in the streets every evening was frightful. I went up and down with cards for the Y.M.C.A. rooms and the Church Army Club, thrusting in between the men and the women. Often eagerly hailed by the men, who would turn off in threes and fours to either refuge.

They don't want to be bad. It is the monotony

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that drags them down. Monotony and sense of loneliness.

I have ached for them,—and do here on Sunday evenings. The afternoons pass pleasantly with music in the gardens, sports and sometimes Regatta. It is the hour from six to seven that drags.

Have tried to find a Hall to receive them. We could have music, plenty of hymns. They would probably come in shoals, if I could offer them a pleasant, cheerful, home-like hour and a good straight talk. They would come to hear a woman talk. The Red-caps are keen on it; but no place is to be found.

And, though the danger may be mitigated, it is awfully real. The other evening I was talking to two officers down from the Front for a night to see the dentist on the morrow.

One was older than the other—a hard man from the Colonies, who showed he had drunk as much as Englishmen often do.

"I wish you would speak to the young chap," he said to me. "He was married last time he went home on leave to a sweet girl. He really loves her, but he declares he's going to make a night of it to-night. Last chance, perhaps, and all that tosh."

"I've had a perfectly rotten time for months," he said. "And it's owing to me to-night."

I turned my chair to face him full, leaned over the little table between us and said:

"Then you had better consult the police. They may or may not be able to help you. I think the

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chances that they can are slender. How much enjoyment you are going to get out of it—I don't know. But I do know that you may have reason your lifelong to rue the night. I do know that your great-grandchildren may rise up and curse you for it."

"By Jove!" the first man said. "I never heard anything so straight in my life. Why don't women talk to us like that? Who are you? Do you mind if I know you? I want to know you."

We talked for some time. He told me his wife did not live with him—and she was right.

They were both of them yearning for God. Not for doctrine, creeds, nor ceremonies; but God. God in their lives, in themselves.

Yours always,

N.

A.P.O. X.,
B.E.F.,
Sunday on the Sidings.

DEAR,

A happy time again on the railway siding. Sat in a field with a crowd and told stories.

Those fat Boches prisoners, just idly touching boxes of Libby, which are set on little rails and run almost of themselves.

The men round me said it would be a cushy job to get one of them to exchange places.

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"You see if a Gerry got away as one of us, he might slip over the Lines up there and get home."

"Yes," said another. "But not a man would do it. They know when they're comfortable."

I told the sergeant to tell them they were "*Sales Boches*" and to put a move on.

"They aren't such a bad lot, ma'am," he said. "They are all right."

Held several Meetings. One among the Leicester Tigers. We had great fun telling stories, and finished with some impressive words, out on the open siding.

I read the 95th Psalm and told them it was true.

"That's a tall order," one man said.

"Yes," I said. "It's a tall order to us to dwell in the secret places of the Most High. Do you know how to do it? Do you know how to make yourself safe? The true part of you cannot be hurt, cannot be touched—know it constantly. Move sometimes not by your limbs but by the very Life-Power within you. Sense it and feel it flowing from its Source. Be immortal now and, strange though it may sound, insensibly material things will begin to have less force upon you. But for goodness' sake don't believe me. I despise a man who believes me. Try it. Prove it one way or the other for yourself."

Found some combings from Base Camps in the garage-yard. They were grumbling, and it is difficult to blame them.

All had fought through the first year of the War. Lately they had been in Base Camps drawing half a

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crown a day. Now they have to return to the Front, drawing sixpence a day.

"And Conscientious Objectors are to take our places," they said.

I took on myself to deny that straight off.

"Anyway it's time some of the blighters who've never been near the top went up and had a taste of it."

I held a meeting among them with great difficulty in a high wind. Some of them had been drinking.

"Are you Church of England?" "What denomination are you?" "Let the lady speak." "God? I don't believe in God." "Shut up, you chaps. We don't want to hear you."

Directly after I had talked several men came clustering round—said they wished I had been allowed a better hearing. One wanted to speak to me. A little fair man.

We went behind a railway truck, and instantly the tears rolled down his cheeks.

He had lost his wife and was fearful about his three baby children.

I assured him that God is love. He would pour love through some one to protect the children. He gulped that was right. His brother and wife were caring for them.

"Don't mind those tears," I said, seeing they worried him. "They will do you good."

"Yes," he said. "I've been wanting to cry. But—but——"

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"Don't mind me," I said hurriedly.

"I don't mind you, ma'am. I don't mind you a bit. But it's the others. The men. And I've got to go back to them."

Always this publicity! He is the first man to have spoken of it.

Leaving him to compose himself, I went back to my friends, the Tigers. Some of the others passed us to pack into the train, quite incapable. I praised the Tigers and said how much finer were the men from the Front. They did not drink.

"Yes," they agreed. "But what beats us is how do they get it, when we can't?"

Going along the trucks for last words, I found my little friend, the widower, sitting in a corner, his legs hanging out. He was composed again. They all asked for my Testament. I said he was to have it and they acquiesced.

I stood on some hot cinders for a last crowd, rather comforting in the cold wind.

Came back pretty well beat out; but a day very worth while.

Yours now and ever,

N.

P.S. 1.—It is quite easy to tell whether the men are from the Front or not. I sprang forward to greet a truckful to-day.

"Hullo, boys, you're from the Top."

"Top?" they said. "No, never been there. Not us, we don't know what the Front looks like."

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I fell back crestfallen. But, so unmistakable was their manly look, I came up again—and saw their shoulders.

"You little liars," I called. "You're Tigers."

They were pleased.

P.S. 2.—Must have shaken hands with a thousand men to-day. Real handshakes too.

Sept. 8th.

YOU DEAR,

Once more to the Happy Valley.

Rather a bumptious young French officer in the train. He said the English fight extremely bravely and extremely badly. They lost far too many men.

Other French officers were telling each other tales of tactics, stratagems, moving guns, artifices for hiding them and so on.

Then came in an exceedingly fine French colonel with a keen look of high intelligence. He had been talking to a young Canadian, who pleased him much. He wore an identification disc on his wrist, silver, very finely worked. He told me the English soldiers grumble very badly down in the Base Camps and were all that there is of gay in the trenches. They sing, they whistle, they seem glad to be there. Quite the reverse with the French. In the trenches they work, they fight magnificently, but they grumble, they grumble, they grumble. But in a Base Camp they are glad to be there, and soon become cheerful. They are in their own country and

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not homesick. Unless I had seen it, I could never have believed how homesick men can be.

Got on my bicycle, and spun through the high-lying cornfields, dipped down the hill, under the arches, turned into the quiet valley, where the grass looked greener than ever, and arrived.

A hearty greeting, and then their news.

The aeroplanes had visited them. Swooping low they had seen a body of men marching on the white road, clear in the bright moonlight. They had dropped bombs right among them.

They were German prisoners, going to relieve the night-shift in the quarries.

Nearly forty lay stiff under blankets in the camp-yard just beyond the hedge.

I went and looked at them. Very big they seemed and still. It was strange to stand among them and feel certainly that they had gone to some other place. Their bodies lay like abandoned coats.

Gaps in some of them were covered with straw.

If they had been our own boys in khaki—— Thank God they were not.

One of the ladies had been up all night, helping the doctor. He came in later, a solemn North-country man, said the massacre was more awful than anything he had seen at the Front. The peaceful white road covered in one instant with human fragments. Cries and groans sounded all night. They had no anæsthetics, and terrible wounds. Some abdominal. Miss S. must have borne up heroically.

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She helped all through the night and until they were sent by ambulance to hospitals.

Lorries came to fetch the dead. A big major came and stood in the doorway. I think purposely to hide what was going on.

I joined some men on the path.

"I didn't yearn to be called on this fatigue party," one remarked.

Other German prisoners were marched up to lift them. An English sergeant had a bundle of labels in his hand. They were rolled in blankets, tied at neck and feet with bass and labelled.

Then the Germans lifted them in the lorries.

When it was over I went into the Hut and said cheeringly:

"They've all gone. Now we can give the men a happy evening and make another kind of history. Give every one something else to think of."

I went into the kitchen to speak to the orderlies and Miss P. came to fetch me, saying a man recognized me and wanted to talk. He had been in a crowd at the railway siding.

"Me and my mate are often talking over what you said that day," he told me. "And we are sure you are right. The Government have their own difficulties, and it's wonderful how they handle these quantities of men, and all fed and victualled. It's no good listening to a fellow croaking. As you said, it's debilitating."

He went on to say he would rather be back at the

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Front than here. He had been sadly upset by the loss of an old friend.

"You come down here and expect things to be quiet; but he was one of our seven men killed the other night, escorting those Germans."

He was sixty-two years old and had four sons in the fighting line. He was going home for good next week, over age.

"The only thing is, his old lady wasn't there to welcome him. She died a few months ago. Well, he was looking to going home, and he's gone now for sure."

Visitors—officers—came pretty frequently to the passage they use as a sort of room, made pretty with settle-seats covered with gay chintz, black with roses on it, and some cushions.

The men began to line up outside half an hour before the Concert, and directly the doors were opened quickly filled the Hall. They had taken the steps away to add to the festivity, and jumped up into the Hut.

The Welsh Choir did not turn up, and there was a little sticking about their getting away; but when they did, they did.

"We're doing it by degrees,
Doing it by degrees."

Something about "Mamma-in-law was at death's door, I pulled her through," "We're doing it by degrees, doing it by degrees."

Miss S., after her terrible time with the Germans,

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had spent the day at W. seeing her wounded brother; walked nearly all the way back before an officer overtook and gave her a lift in a motor, played most of the accompaniments and was off to Blighty next morning at six o'clock. These women are wonderful.

We had a merry little supper. Padre stayed. The table inside the door was lit by what looked like an antique ecclesiastic candelabrum, but was recently made by the Boches from old tin cans. A thick handsome stand, finely turned in a rolling pattern.

Rain poured down. They had to open umbrellas over their beds in the two slips of bedrooms.

Mrs. K. told of the disastrous effect of wet upon the little red curtains and the sanguinary pools they left upon the floor.

Once they filled her india-rubber boots. It looked so terrible as she poured it out of the leg that she had to give it to the orderlies to cope with it.

It was cosy, and we did have a good supper, although the rain dripped from time to time, and Miss S. had to go and see if the umbrellas caught the wet places on the beds.

Miss P. and I bundled up in oil-skins at last, and we had a pleasant quiet walk back to our billet.

A jolly little morning, cooking and chatting with the men from twelve to two, while the ladies sold at the counter. I was helped in the kitchen by an orderly. Boiled potatoes in their skins. Made coffee, back-wood fashion. Ground the beans after

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heating them in the oven. Put them in a saucepan with cold water, let it simmer, added more cold water, simmer again, cold water again, simmer again and so on. It was fine after two hours on the fire. Also stewed pears. Skinned them with a clever little potato peeler. Put them in an earthenware pot with water, sugar-water and a tablespoonful of lime-juice cordial.

A nice old military doctor came into the kitchen and wanted to know what I was doing with the cordial.

He had retired some years before the War and was hunting round Church Stretton; but they raked him out and he had been in the thick of things ever since.

Bicycled back to the station after lunch.

Soldiers were passing in trucks. As they slowed down through the station twice I heard them remark: "That's Mamma."

In the train a young French officer returning on leave was very anxious about the raids and his people.

A row of W.A.A.C. girls on the platform, and Mrs. K., whom I had met in New York, rushing round and hunting them up.

They are to be seen every night now in the streets, rapidly coupling up with the men.

The first night they made a great stir. Every man looked two inches taller. Smart girls, too, wearing their soft slouch hats well. All the better

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for their drilling, putting their feet down well from the thigh.

They say the work is hard. On from seven a.m. till five-thirty, and obliged to be in by eight.

They are to be sent home if they don't obey rules.

"You can easily return to Blighty then," I remarked.

"We don't want to return that way," a girl replied.

"And I oughtn't to put such a notion in your head."

"It comes there of itself all right—don't you fret."

A big fight is before them; but they will win out.

Best love,

Yours as ever,

N.

STILL HERE!

Sept. 15*th.*

BEST ONE,

Yesterday at the railway siding had a delightful time in the field with Lincoln Yellow-Bellies. They tell me if they put sixpence on their tummies it turns to gold.

Sing-song and stories and pantomime rhymes. Men laughing and clapping a great deal.

The pantomime was to have been at Marseilles. We could get a Casino with a big stage, and the Hall

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held two thousand. But the soldiers were taken away at the very last minute. The disappointment of my life.

A fine Lancashire man, Jock, who had kept a hospital ward alive for three weeks, consented to be Granny.

A boy who had been a choir-boy in Lichfield Cathedral, and could sing a beautiful soprano, was to be Red Riding Hood. A Welsh lad, with another fine voice, her faithful Black Cat. Every one wanted to be the Wolf, who was of course the Kaiser. Such a run on the part we had to add Little Willie, the Wolf's Cub.

In the first act Granny kept school. The scholars marched in, singing, "Boys in khaki; Boys in blue," and then she called for the Lesson of the Day.

"Bobbie-Beat-the-Boches, repeat your verse!"

He stood up and said:

"When the soldiers have been good
(Just as if they really could!)
Good at stables, good at drill,
Good at never getting ill,
Good at firing off the guns,
Good at bringing pence for buns,
Good at leaving town in time
To be up in Camp by nine."

Johnnie-Jump-on-Germans got up and said:

"Good at getting up too late,
Good at slipping past the gate.
Good at keeping out of bounds,
Good at dodging all the rounds."

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Granny got after him with the switch, and the others said in turn:

"Good at standing their C.B.,
Good at swimming in the sea,
Good at drinking in Canteen,
Good at killing in between."

"If you want to hear them cheer
Give the boys some pints of beer."

"Good at bearing with a fool,
Good at bandaging a mule,
Good at eating bread and jam,
Good at never saying ——,
Good at eating bully beef,
Good at getting off to sleep."

"When the soldier's warned for picket
Right well he knows he's got to stick it.
When it is Parade for pay,
He gets there sure without delay."

"Good at standing in the sun,
Good at making Germans run,
Good at lying in the wet,
Always cheery, never fret."

"Good at raising Cain for Kaiser,
Till at last he may grow wiser,
Till he knows what he has lit on,
And has learnt to dread the Briton."

"When the soldier keeps quite fit,
Never swears at cleaning kit,
Round about the time of Santa
He may come and see our Panta."

All together:

"When the soldiers have been good,
They shall see Red Riding Hood."

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Verses four and eight come in for vigorous applause.

Once they asked me to repeat the Beer verse five times. I did patiently, but when there was yet another call of "Again," said:

"If you want to hear them swear
See our boys have too much beer."

After which they let me go on.

Some amusing Scotties. One said his Annie was waiting for him, but he was no waitin' for her.

The Middlesex are Never-sweats.

Some of them had a horrid brew of cold messy tea, dry leaves floating on the top.

A man from South Africa sprang out of his truck, split a bit of railway lumber with his bayonet, asked for two tins—I bet the Germans are not throwing their tins about everywhere, but carefully collecting them—and made a fire. I stood as a screen, for naturally a fire is forbidden. It was a beautiful day at last, and it was a beautiful fire.

They put a bit of wood floating on the tea to prevent the smoke catching it.

Under my parasol, my skirt spread to hide the fire, I remarked how absurd it was of me in my Canadian Lectures to have told British soldiers how to make fire in the backwoods; but it was like me. If I met the Archbishop of Canterbury, I would tell him how to pray.

"Well, what would you tell him?" they asked. "Praying's no use."

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"I'd tell him not to pray for this and that for ourselves and a dump on the head for somebody else. I don't think there's much sense in petitioning, but a man should say quietly to himself at times, 'The Spirit of God hath made me. The breath of the Almighty gave me life.' He needn't go down on his knees to do that, but can just take it in quietly to himself at any little odd old minute. And renew himself. Tell himself he's a bit of the Divine Fire and warm himself at his true centre again; instead of getting too far off and extinguishing like these sparks."

They were going to join the Public School Brigade. The firemaker said he'd been at a Public School fifteen years ago, and in South Africa ever since.

"And time to forget all you never learnt there," I remarked. "And learn something worth knowing."

To which he agreed.

I told them of the little lad of nineteen in hospital who cut off the black crusts to throw them away, so I sat down the other side of his form and ate them. He looked over his shoulder and asked:

"Are you really eating them? I do wish you were my missus."

"And good taste too," the firemaker remarked.

I told the same story to another fine bunch of men in the field. A Scotsman who had been in America said:

"He may be a boy; but he has a man's feelings."

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I told that crowd of old Duncan, the road-mender at Stronachlachar, and how he called me the peat-wife, and the Scotsman looked at me with his twinkle.

"It's a far hale from an artist to a peatwife," he said. "But there's few things you haven't been and could be yet."

This led me on to tell of standing on the peat-stack with Duncan, and old Elizabeth coming from the cottage and calling:

"She'll fall! She'll fall!"

"She winna fall," Duncan said stoutly. "She's been a sailor some time."

"That's the stuff to gie 'em," they called.

The Scotsman knew I wasn't English, and asked if I would be French? "Not," he added, "that ye don't talk English like an Englishwoman, for ye do."

He also said I would not be marrying, for I was a Universalist. All this off his own bat by merely looking at me.

"Not but what there is always One," he added, with his hand raised, "that shines in our life like a star."

No more to-night, beloved. The street is silent. The poor torn trees in the Park are soughing like the sea.

Bye-bye,

Your sleepy

N.

P.S.—The tea was beautiful, boiling, and so good

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before we had good-byes that were awfully heart-rending. Such a splendid set of men.

P.S. 2.—A Red-cap at the siding said he supposed I had stayed away all through the bad weather. Indignantly I replied I had always been there. "But not the little white parasol," he said.

P.S. 3.—And most important!

Are you the star?

A.P.O. X.,
B.E.F.,
Sept. 10*th.*

DEAR,

And suddenly the men have started grumbling.

"Tell Lloyd George I'd like to be his pet dog. I'd give him such a welcome when he came from the House of Commons after the nice big dinner he'd been giving me."

"You tell them not to send out any more Woman's Army, but to send out those slackers at munitions who are doing our jobs and drawing three times our pay. Send them out to the Front for a change and let us go home to our old work."

A prominent Minister's visit to the Front comes in for comment:

"I see him hop into his motor and skip away out of it the moment a shell come along. He hadn't come out to face the music, not he. They don't mean to risk their lives and their millions."

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"Yes, and went home and talked of the grim determination in our eyes. I know the tears were running out of mine. How he saw what was behind them beats me."

These were my efforts at consolation:

"I have to dry your tears and hold your hands all the time. Suppose you start in comforting me. Mind you, boys, I don't complain, but I've lost a quarter of my income since War began."

"And we've lost the whole of ours."

I stopped.

Another set had a great talk against the Belgians, and then began on the French.

I sat up and said to the man who began:

"If you say a word against my compatriots, I'll fetch your Bundhook and shoot you dead."

He lay on his pack and said:

"You can get my Bundhook and shoot me alive. You can't shoot me dead. There are no cartridges round here."

One of the railway guards is a friend of mine.

Men came down in hospital train, ten days after passing up, and asked for Little Mamma to come and talk to them, and he had a great hunt round for me. But I was away on one of the little tours.

Since then he often fetches me to some particular crowd and acts as Chairman, introducing me in most handsome manner.

Last time he picked up a bit of stray lumber and beat it against the cattle-truck instead of clapping.

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An effective piece of applause. He asked for the Sergeant story. Couldn't think of it at the moment, so said I would tell two Kiltie tales.

"One of Harry Lauder's?" a man asked from the truck.

"Does Harry Lauder tell Kiltie tales?"

"No, shut up," the man beside him said, hitting him with his elbow. "Let her get on. She has better tales than Harry Lauder any way."

I had to tell you this, dear, not to be rude to Harry Lauder, but because it was such a compliment to—my tales.

I told of the old woman getting on the 'bus and the conductor, pushing her up, said:

"If ye'd more yeast in ye, mother, ye'd rise better."

She replied:

"If you'd more yeast in you, young man, you'd be better bred."

Sept. 12th.

Another delightful day with them yesterday. We were in the field, but had to move on to the line almost at once.

They called:

"Come with us, Ma. Come on, Mother. Come on, Lily of the Valley," as I picked my way, a little from them, over the tracks.

"Don't call me Lily of the Valley," I said, joining

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them again. "Don't call me Madam, nor Maud, nor My dear, nor Muddermoiselle. Call me Mamma!"

They were Staffords. A delightful boy stood beside me, evidently only just joined; for he did not know they were Jammy Boys or Pozzy Wallers.

"Now if they called us Pozzy Swallows!" he said.

"Programmes!" he called in professional style. "Programmes! One penny!"

They crowded up.

He had been a newsboy and gave us some good songs.

I asked what the men would expect me to do if they sang the Third Verse in some of them? He agreed gravely, it was always in the Third Verse, and said I must get up and go out. He was very firm about this.

"I have been on the stage in Paris," he said. "You know, the stage coach. I paid a penny."

A menagerie was passing once and they made a mistake, picked him up and put him in a cage.

"What did they mistake you for?"

"A hippopotamus. I wish I were in a cage now," he said. "I wish I were in a cage at the Zoo."

"Yes, and we'd come and feed you with nuts."

"I'd get my meals regular then. They call me the Chinese Monkey."

"Why Chinese?"

"And you know another time I was nearly taken——"

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"Taken?"

"To jail."

Three officers standing near badly concealed their mirth. In less classical language they were splitting their sides.

When it came to good-bye, he lingered to take my hand, while the others scrambled to their places. He told me the boys needed cheering all the time and wouldn't sleep till he'd sung to them at night.

If I lost sight for a moment of that which is deathless in these boys, I could not bear these farewells, which we keep so gay, when they are going up to what is worse than hell.

Found another fine set of older men.

Some gay Chinks, wounded, came up. One wanted to uncover his finger and show me. The soldiers stopped him and gave them of their rations. Bully-beef, which they ate with chop-sticks, very daintily.

They had been scrapping with German prisoners, furious at the raid, in which some of them were injured. They tied razors on to bamboos and went for the Boches, and I hope they gave as good as they got.

Seeing the Chinamen I told the men about me some of Confucius' doctrines. What a man does, that he is. Don't worry about things one cannot possibly know, nor do good for the hope of some future reward. Live so that we earn our own respect, and our reward is immediate—in the added growth

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and strength of our own character, which will not be without effect upon our environment.

And they listened. That is always the point. Not what I say, but to what they listen. I gave out sooner than usual, about three o'clock. Between meatless days—we have two following each other. Air-raids. The night before they had sounded the siren just as I went to bed. The siren went but no bombs, and a housemaid—not Alys—ran to me, really frightened. It was weird. We did not know what to expect. We stood on the balcony. A bomb would almost have reassured us. And still it hooted its sad hoot.

Well, I went to see Mrs. K. at the W.A.A.C.'s Camp. One of the girls there, frightened during a raid, leapt into another girl's bed to be cuddled. Shrapnel that had not dispersed in the air as it should from our own guns came through the corrugated iron roof, right through the bed she had just left.

A German Taube has been brought down. An officer highly decorated, called the Ace of Aces. He has been organizing these flights, and says the Germans mean to put in much worse for us all.

Finished the day with an amusing French Class. Men pretty well advanced. One asked if I would tell him what to call the young lady with whom he was walking out.

"What do you want to call her?" I asked.

"Mopotitparrotchienne," he answered.

The last word sounded something like a female dog. I was completely perplexed.

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"*Ma petite Parisienne*," was the pretty way he wished to address her.

Thanks to the vowels being on the blackboard, I took him through those he needed, first without the consonants and then with them.

He said it beautifully.

A pleasant clergyman who had joined us said he had asked for marmalade and they brought him an omelet. A perfect example of pronouncing the consonants instead of the vowels. Doubtless they heard the M and L and guessed omelet.

Yet one more episode. An officer at dinner told me that coming out of action was a Tommy with his arm round a Boche. Both wounded. They went into Field Hospital and came out, again entangled. He with his shoulder bound, and the Boche with his trouser cut away and leg bandaged. They got on the train together, probably an open truck, and the nurses brought the Tommy a cup of tea. He took it—his arm still round the Boche—then said:

"Here, you old devil, you want it worse than me," and gave him the whole of it.

Excuse the scrawled line across the page. Glass fell suddenly behind my back with a crash from the already broken window. Made me jump.

The Oxford and Bucks are called Ox and Jocks.

Bye-bye,

Yours ever,

N.

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DEAR,

When the English are snappy and snubby with me, I used to think it was racial—that something in me irritates them, just as flat-hattedness and flat-footedness depress me. But do you know they are never so nasty to me as they can be to each other. Isn't it odd?

Some of them really do try to make another's inwardness bleed.

The guns seem quite friendly after it. They at least hit in the open and only smash the outside.

You know I don't mean the soldiers. They have got into a bigger place, and if the sun does not shine their courtesy always does.

The Essex are Jaggers. The Nottinghams, Notts and Jotts. The Royal Scots, Pontius Pilate's Bodyguard. The Wiltshires, Springers. The Bedfords say they are Jammy Boys and Pozzy Wallers too, but when I ask the Staffords if this is true, they reply:

"It was only one of them fell into the pozzy one day."

"And what did you do with the pozzy?" I asked.

"Ate it."

The Norfolks are Holy Boys, because they sold their Bibles to buy beer.

"That isn't true. Not a man in the British Army would do such a thing," a Norfolk remarked thoughtfully.

"I am sure he wouldn't," I replied.

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"No, he wouldn't. Nothing could make him do such a thing. I can tell you for why."

"Tell me why."

"Because he has no Bible to sell."

Bye-bye,

Yours always,

N.

P.S.—Perhaps after all the British are in the world to harry and worry and torment each other. It may be a form of Purgatory they must go through. But if ever you have to be born among the British, pray to be the dog. He is always treated with consideration and respect.

A TRUE EPISODE OF WAR.

In the Hall of an Hotel not far from the Front.

Mamma was starting for a walk
With the soldier boys to talk.
Little foot upon the mat,
Lace veil floating from her hat.
Enter a colonel, full of joy.
Just from a trench
He thought her French,
Himself but quite the boy.
"Saucy!" cried he to the others
Much too polite to be his brothers.
Was this Mamma? It was I say.

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But never at a loss,
She raised her head,
And quickly said,
"I know who's got the sauce!"

L'ENVOI.

They fled, those men, from out the door
With ears as red as beef-steak raw.

A.P.O. X.,
B.E.F.,
FRANCE.

YOU DEAR BIG-MINDED BOY,

In hospital again. Chummie can't sleep—otherwise doing much better. His wife and mother have been over to see him and are gone. His wife much older than he is. He married at nineteen and now is twenty-five.

"Nineteen is too young to marry," he said. "Unless you are quite sure. I was quite sure. And, oh, I have done right," he added with complete satisfaction in that deep voice of his.

He lay for many hours heavily wounded in the wet before they found him, and is ill.

We had a quiet talk together. He is a great spirit. I quoted the healing verse from Romans, and he drank it in.

Down by the far end of the tent, and sitting out on the sand, the men were very cheerful.

One told me how he was helping himself to water

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in a farm near the Front, when a little boy of six tried to prevent him, calling him all the names he had learnt from the Tommies.

"Eh bien, Allymang," he said to the youngster.

Next day he went for a wash to the boy's own farm. The little fellow flew at him, kicked him on the shin and hailed even worse names upon him, because he had called him Allymang.

"I couldn't help laughing at the little chap," he said.

They always take such things good-naturedly, the British. But it should be explained to them that the French have a water system of the middle-ages; and water with them is almost as rare and priceless as milk.

One hot bath fell to my lot a fortnight after getting here, and no bath ever since. For five days not a tap in the town ran. Our poor over-worked servants had to fetch every drop in crocks from the canal. It was wise to keep to leeward of certain savoury spots. Lots of us were seedy, and most of the English didn't know why they were—they hadn't discovered the water was shorter than usual.

Then one evening bicycling into the town, I heard a tap running. You can't think how good it sounded.

Talking of milk, another man told me he was on sentry duty. Two cows left a neighbouring field and went for a walk on their own. He did not know the French for cow, so he shouted to the woman at the farm: "Le lait promenaday."

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And all this time I'm still in hospital, so you can imagine me sitting on the side of a bed, or at the foot of an empty one—strictly forbidden—and chatting thus to the Blue Boys.

A little young one said it would be just the job for him to take a tin hat round for the Collection after my Talks about them in Blighty.

"Yes," I said. "And then I could say, 'Look at this doughty warrior who for you and for me has fought through many a bloody battle.'"

"Terrific battle, Ma. Terrific. Don't say bloody. They'll say you learnt that from us."

Another elder man offered to be my butler, and gave us a fine act of telling my Lord Duke of Downshire his carriage was at the door.

He was very kind in cutting me rootie and pozzie, and told us he had heard me speak.

"Was it in Number Six Rest Camp?" I asked innocently.

"Rest?" he asked. "Rest——?" and nearly fainted.

Over the hillocky sand to the next ward, and past the pathetic little gardens, gay but dry, the English in their enthusiasm for flowers set even in the sand.

Here a Canadian lay dying. His lung pierced. A small screen failed to screen him, and we could see the noble silhouette of his thin eagle face.

Strange to think how eagerly some woman many miles away would have stooped to the dignified form, and cherished every look, every breath.

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Little Sister was soothing his last moments. He was propped upright.

Farther up the ward men were chatting. One hopping round with a gas-burnt leg.

They said gas must have touched the Canadian. The burnt man said he didn't know he was gassed till next morning, when a shoot of agony like lightning zigzagged through his leg. He was wet through at the time the gas took him. But he is going to get well.

I bicycled on to B. Camp. Stood on the form and told stories. I asked a big Scotsman to sit on it to keep it firm. Generally have two men, one at either end, for the forms are rickety; but he was so big and hefty I thought he would hold it safe.

And so he did, until I repeated the Scotch Reel. He got carried away, and began to reel the bench. I reeled too, and leapt to the floor. The men reeled too—with laughter.

He promised to be careful and not to do it again.

"I'll have no more of you," I said firmly.

And two younger ones came and I mounted again and finished, while the Scotsman performed a reel on the open space to the time.

A man gave us Bus Cries. I asked him to go on, but it made him too dry.

It reminded me of the man travelling on a passenger-boat round Scotland. In the next cabin lay an old woman, and he couldn't sleep for she was saying:

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"Eh, but ah'm dry, dry! Eh, but ah'm dry!"

He rang for the steward and sent her a drink, hoping for peace.

He heard her rapturously greet it, but then she crooned cheerfully:

"Eh, but ah was dry! eh, but ah was dry!" until it was time to begin again: "Eh, but ah'm dry! eh, but ah'm dry, dry!"

They said they loved it, but it made them thirsty too. They felt for the poor old woman. Shan't tell it again. It is painful to have one's sympathy too much roused.

Hope I haven't made you thirsty?

Always yours,

N.

A.P.O. X.

Dear,

If it were possible to wake in a town and not know in which country it was, you would only have to sit up in bed and listen. The cracking of whips would tell if it were France, and the whistling of the street-boys if you were in England.

The French Army does not sing. Naturally, it does not, for they have lost their wives and little children in invaded country. And if a man is fortunate himself and his dear ones are comparatively safe, those of his neighbours most probably are not. So they march and work in silence; but

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the British are singing all the time. This evening I found two French soldiers, old and rather forlorn, peering into the door of the Hut in B. Camp, wondering what went on there.

I invited them in, and they sat down on a form at the lower end of the Hut. Some desultory singing was going on, nothing much to attract them, so they rose to go and came up to the piano to say good-bye in all courtesy to me.

Every one in the Hut thought they had come up to the piano to sing, and they rose to their feet as one man, following them up, and herding round to listen.

"But look at the men, messieurs," I said, receiving them in the circle that was left. "They think you are going to sing. Will you not?"

Both exclaimed at the idea and said it was impossible.

And still the men poured up and leant over each other's shoulders, and got on the forms to see better.

"But only look at the audience," I appealed. "To disappoint them all! Ah, sing us, monsieur, if you will be so very kind, just one verse of the *Marseillaise?*"

The older of the two rose to the drama of the moment. He put his feet together, folded his hands like a child and in a weak, quavering voice, but with passion, sang one glorious verse.

"Now, boys," I cried, "don't let it down. Show them how you can whistle, whistle, whistle!"

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And they whistled.

The two old soldiers stood in the midst of them, their caps off their heads, and not a man in the Hut but was moved with the soul-stirring strain.

Bye-bye, beloved. I must sleep to have strength for to-morrow,

Yours,

N.

And another Wet Day.

Oh, rain, rain, go to Spain!
(And that's a nice, gentle place to send you.)

BEST ONE,

Had to abandon the Horse Hospital Camp; but was not expected in the Hut as usual, and phoned on hearing it to say I was coming on Monday.

Spent a few hours on the railway lines. Came back very wet. Went to a little hotel for dinner. Found two small Merchant Service officers, just boys, dining at the next table, and presently had their story from them. They were torpedoed ten months ago while carrying a ship with a cargo of sugar. It was night. The bigger boy was in luck, for he was up in the crow's-nest and had on all his warm clothes. The little boy had had a bad hit on the head the previous night, and although the torpedo passed within twelve feet of him it did not waken him. Happily some one roused him, and very dazed he went on deck almost as he was. "I must have

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been still stupid with the blow," he told us. "For I didn't see anything wrong when I got there and was going below."

Nothing but the boy's innate courtesy saved his life. He saw some men wrestling with getting a boat away. "They seemed short-handed, so I turned back to help." They got the boat away in time and swept him in with them, as he was. Poor little chap, they were nine hours in an open boat.

"Then they forgot all about us being torpedoed," the elder one took up again, "for ten months. But now they've suddenly remembered. And we're to have ten days' leave, and we are going home to-morrow."

They were going home!

Everything else was away in the past. And the little one was so little. He looked as if he ought to be lifted up in a big motherly lap in front of a fire and cuddled.

Next Day.

Very hot on the lines and trains very noisy. The men grieve that I am not married; though they feel the loss is not mine. A big sergeant, a fine, tall man, needing some handling, kept proposing.

"I'm a quiet man about a house," he said.

At first it was good fun, but finally I said:

"He must have one wife at least to be so free with his proposals."

A roar went up, and it may have hit home, for

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he ceased. They asked my name, saying they would all know it if they could hear it.

Later I came away over the lines into the little lane, leaving them on the tracks. A woman at the door of the *estaminet*, hearing them call after me, remarked:

"They are well different to what they once were. Then always singing. Noise all the time. But now they are silent, unless you are there, madame."

At B. Camp out on the veranda, I told of my Tour across the States, telling of the Tommies, speaking for the Huts. Not such a large number as usual; but much rapt attention. It makes a good Talk with plenty of live anecdotes. I told them how people cried as I talked, and they wanted to know how I made them cry.

"No, boys; if they cried, you might. And you know your miseries."

They laughed at this, but still insisted.

So I read them something from my newspaper reports, I picked out:

"You do not realize what it is to be in an invaded country—in the clutch of a foreign invader. In this most marvellous rallying of nations since the world began, families are being separated for ever, men are going mad amidst the awful din, the heaps of dead, the dying and wounded, the screams of tortured horses, the bursting of shell and the agonies of the gas fumes."

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I looked up. - They were taking this stolidly. I read on :

"Imagine how you would feel if the one whom you love and for whom you prepare at five o'clock in the afternoon, when his duties are done until bed-time had no place to go and sit down at a table or in a chair."

I looked up again.

Their eyes were swimming with tears.

I read "The Lord is my Shepherd" out there in the open. And, as I grasped their hands, apologized.

They were still choking.

"It won't hurt us, Mamma."

"It don't make any difference. We've got it all the time."

I felt guilty as I swung along on my bicycle, racing the coming night.

Do you know, dear, that blue eyes cry more quickly than brown ?

Are your eyes blue ?

Bye-bye,
Yours,
N.

A.P.O. X.

BEST OF MEN,

A most delightful Sunday at the railway siding. Inniskillings in the morning. Very fine men.

Did not get their train, some of the others, and

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had to march back to B. Camp, six miles, with their packs, and back again next morning. One very little chap.

"He's too small," I said.

"Ay," said a man, lifting his pack. "But his spirit's great."

It shone from his pale blue eyes. A living thing, like a sword.

I held little meetings all over the field. Had some biscuit and cheese from their rations, and they gathered round, near the Boches runnels; but, as it was the Sabbath, they rest.

The men called out that gambling was beginning, although it was Sunday. I crossed over to the Crown and Anchor sheet, where a man was sitting with it between his legs, tossing the dice, and calling:

"Even chances all the time."

The men were standing round, but no one played. So I held a little meeting there and they listened.

Away on the tracks later found some fine men, who had been in the Great Retreat. Flying men, too, stood around.

A man called to me to come over, when I asked, "Who wants Little Mamma to tell stories?" and settled his pack for me to sit on.

Have never heard men laugh so heartily. Among other tales I told them, of telling a sergeant in Edinburgh High Street the first days of the War of a Club for the soldiers.

He said he would gladly send his men. "Come

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yourself." "Ay, but the worst of it is, mem, the wor-r-r-st of it is, I'm a married man."

Sitting in Craigleith Hospital over the fire with wounded men that afternoon, I told them about it. They smiled and we passed on to other talk when a man, very ill, in a bed half down the ward suddenly began crowing like a cock. We flew to him. I propped him up to get his breath.

"Don't die till Nurse comes!" I begged.

"Don't mind me," he choked. "I'm all right." Choke, choke. "I'm laughing." Worse chokes and gasps. "I'm a married man mesel!"

The soldier who invited me over laughed sometimes till he groaned:

"Don't make me laugh so! It hurts."

"Don't die till Nurse comes!" I implored him.

He asked me to write to his old mother in Newcastle, and tell her he still kept the piece of firewood he had drawn from the fire before leaving home. He took it from his pocket.

He gave me a black button and a stud.

A man standing by said he would soon regret giving it. So after holding the collar-stud I said:

"Now I will give it to you, as a souvenir of me."

Then I asked if they were ready for something serious?

"You say the word, Mamma"—grave and earnest at once—"and we'll all kneel down."

"I wouldn't ask you to kneel," I said. "We can have a quiet moment where we are."

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In an instant some twenty had taken off their caps and knelt down on the tracks around me.

Men on the farther tracks could see us distinctly. The officers standing about the little Hut, and a knot of French railway guards.

It gave me such a lump in my throat, I couldn't utter.

He pulled my dress.

"Now then, Mamma, you can say it. You do it."

"'Father, the hour is come,'" I quoted. "'Glorify Thy sons, that Thy sons may glorify Thee.'" A few words about the Great Spirit within as well as without us, a silence and then all together the Lord's Prayer and a Blessing.

At the end a man kneeling just before me sat back on his pack and said earnestly:

"There are a lot of brave women, working away in England, and over here. But the bravest of the brave, the bravest woman I ever saw in my life"—I gazed at him, thinking he was going to tell me of his mother—"is you."

I nearly fell off my pack with surprise, but rallied and took his hand.

Went into the Hut for a breath, then came back and on to another set farther down.

Fell badly here with a sore grumbler and an odious huge young Scotsman. A crowd gathered; but the grumbler would go on.

"Get the grumble out," I told him. "Let the

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wind off your chest, son. But, when you've let it, stop; or you'll only debilitate yourself and others."

He went on.

A fine young lad sprang up behind me.

"You're not the only soldier in the British Army," he said. "This lady has come to entertain us and make us feel merry, and why won't you let us listen to her, instead of your dismal drawl we can hear morning and night?"

"All I mean to say is, I am a married man with three children."

"And your wife's a happy woman at this moment that you are away here in France, if you've ever spoken to her like you've spoken to this lady."

I made it a serious Meeting. Spoke of the Eternal Love and how it flows to us through the mother, through the comrade, and how we can be a channel for it ourselves, and dwell with a heaven in our breasts, instead of abiding in the other hot place of hate.

The Englishman sat looking like a little heap of scared bile; but the Scotsman as soon as I had finished said:

"Ye're talking about what ye know nothing."

"Have you been over the Top?" I asked.

"He's had half his side shot away."

"Fall in!"

The men scrambled up.

I followed my two friends. For another fine middle-aged sergeant, breast covered with ribbons,

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had tried to quell the Englishman. The other lad was really a sailor and drafted in for a short spell.

I asked which life he preferred.

"Why, I'd rather be afloat," he said.

A Red Cross train came in and three Sisters looked out of a window.

The men called them.

"Get a bed ready for me, Sister!" one shouted. "I'll be coming back with you almost at once!"

But of course they whistled and called "Chérie" and some made kissing noises. The Sisters withdrew.

I stood back from the train on the track and called so that a lot could hear:

"Now see how silly you are, boys. You liked talking to the Sisters and you have gone and driven them away."

"But we can't drive you away, Mamma," a boy shouted from a truck. "You've the pluck to stay, no matter what we call you!"

"Boys," I said, frightfully pleased, "no one yet has called me anything worse than Lily of the Valley."

There was a shout of laughter.

The train went.

"Good-bye, Mamma. Good-bye, Lily of the Valley," they yelled.

And the last thing I saw as the train went round the bend, off to the Front, was the bit of fire-wood waving, that I should tell his mother.

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Back, cleaned, and went to the Belgian Concert in their Soldiers' Club.

An artistic atmosphere.

Yodelling when I arrived. Funny songs. Man in costume with a huge mouth, awfully droll and always in tune. The commandant introduced his uncle. A very beautiful old *curé*, the shine of the Light of Lights pouring quietly from his deep grey eyes. Four times the Boches had put him up to shoot him.

He had been doing the dressings in the hospital; for their doctors were all either killed or prisoners. After Mass one early morning he said to a Sister: "I shall be round in a quarter of an hour."

But he never went to them again, for the Boches took him as hostage.

They had to dig their own graves, and four times he and the others were marched out and lined up to be shot.

Three times they took them back.

The fourth time at the last moment they put in his place a lad who had been found with a fowling-piece in his hand.

They were shot while he was still in the yard.

After that he escaped; but, by the time he was telling me of this, a Flemish Play was going on. I could not hear the details.

Just these rough soldiers could not take a wrong move on the stage. Always they grouped artistically.

Suddenly the lights went out.

Every one moved for the outside. The com-

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mandant's voice pealed to them to remain in their seats.

You could have heard a mouse stir. He took us three ladies outside to a little yard.

There seemed to be no raid, and we crossed the hall in the dark among the men to get to the street.

The *curé* gave me his hand. I felt it might be an image of the Hand of God leading one through Unknown Life. His touch blessed.

On the bridge under the stars, I asked what were his feelings on facing the Boches to be shot down.

Almost as if he were sorry not to be able to thrill me more, he said:

"Mademoiselle, I felt very simply. Hardly was I moved. Once I remember thinking, after all, not such a poor exit to be shot by a *bel Allemand*."

At dinner I sat with three British officers and told them about him. The two younger ones laughed.

I asked what was the matter, were they hysterical? And told them it was like a chute from a higher atmosphere to a lower to come among the British again.

They asked if the British were wicked?

"No, but dull," I said.

One of them—Dr. F.—was delightful.

They remarked they could mix with every one.

"Yes, when you are good," I said. "The French are wise. They do not say 'good as gold,' they say 'good as bread.' You are bread. One can enjoy bread with everything, with kippers and caviare."

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And Dr. F. showed such understanding that I remarked:

"Now, you can be kippers or caviare, as well as bread."

Don't pay an Englishman compliments or tell him anything nice you think of him. He will think you are lying. Give him a straight blow from the shoulder and he'll stand like a man to take it and want to be your friend.

They tried to teach me to be English. They saw me back through the dark streets.

"Good-bye, I have so enjoyed meeting you all," I said.

They exclaimed that was dreadful. So I said:

"I have passed a beastly evening and simply loathed having to talk to you."

They said that was fine.

"But I haven't forgiven you yet," Dr. F. lingered to say, "for telling me I could be kippers or caviare."

Do you like this letter?

Bye-bye,
Yours,
N.

A.P.O. X.,
B.E.F.

Dear,

Again at the railway siding on Monday, for a short while only. A man told me they were going

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to earn the soldier's epitaph, "R.I.P. Rest in Pieces, Rise if Possible."

A horrid wind-storm came up.

Mrs. W. gave me one of her delicious little hot meals in the little house, where she lives.

It was built by a man for his three daughters-in-law and has three tiny suites, each with a cooking-stove.

Her maid cooks for us in the back-room. We sit at a round table in the front and she serves us.

Basket-chairs, flowers, photographs make one feel at home again.

They told me not to attempt the Horse Hospital in the wind; but I set off and it was stiff.

I divide the road mentally into three pieces.

The first, past the labour camp, over the marshes to the railway crossing. Second, over the field-path and stiff into the teeth of the breeze. A scud came on and drenched my little silk coat before I could get on my oil-skin. Cornfields on one side, hedge and tall trees the other; and out on the third portion of the road, the big open cornfields on high ground and the booming of guns. It sounded like violently moving very heavy furniture and shoving it against the wall with a bang. Two and three pieces at a time.

Comfortable to feel one is out of reach. Very nice *poilus* staying for rest at the big farm, but I was half an hour instead of a quarter pumping along each division of the road and couldn't stay. The last half-mile I had to walk.

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In at the back door of the Camp, and met two fine Australian sergeants coming out.

They promised to tell at the farm, where I was to sleep, that I had arrived.

I told them I would have come oftener. It was not wind and rain beat me out, but the sorry welcome. They said what I truly believe—it was not the men's fault, they never knew I was coming; but they knew to-day.

I had told the officers, and Major W. had it in orders.

They meant to turn up in force, also the band.

I walked past the tents where shaving was going on, apologized for coming in at the back door, but it was a short cut in the wind.

Arrived at the Hut, and was told:

"There's to be no concert."

"Very well," I said. "I am going up to the officers' mess and shall be down at seven o'clock. I will give them a Talk and a Lottery."

Stores were being served out.

Last time I was up in the Hut a man said:

"Hullo; I lost a pair of boots all along of you!"

"How's that?" I asked.

"Why, stores were being given out, and I sat near the door meaning to listen to a few words and then slip out and fetch a pair of boots. But after you started talking, blest if I could get away till you said the last word. And then it was too late."

Found my friend Capt. B. on the lawn, he took

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me in and did not give me a drink; but I asked for one—and had it. I had good fun chaffing my honor-r-rar-r-ry brother officers of the Veter-r-rin-er-r-rary Camp.

Went down to the Hut.

The band was straggling along the road to my joy with brass instruments and music stands.

The Hall was full. The band had the platform. Mr. L. gave me a little table and chair below. Major W. came in.

The band played two short lively pieces.

I spoke for half an hour on "How the Hut was Built"—my tour across the States.

It was a fairy-tale to be standing in the big Hut, packed with bronzed faces of men—the storm raging outside—listening intently under slouched hats to the story of what was happening thousands of miles away, while they were wintering in the camp with no better refuge than canvas tents.

It began on Christmas Eve. I was sitting over a log fire, snow falling without, at the Lake in the Woods, when Le Bon Jésus—as the French children say—sent me the gift of a letter, asking me to bring money to build the Hut.

What to do?

All speaking programmes were long since complete and the land riddled with subscriptions of all kinds.

By the same post—can life be wonderful?—a friend enclosed a newspaper cutting in which Gertrude

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Atherton blamed the lethargy of the West, and yet another in which Bishop Beecher of Nebraska hotly replied they might well be lethargic, for no one troubled to come and tell them of the sufferings of Europe.

I went straight to them. Just dropping off in New York to get the generous British War Relief to take the funds. All to be posted direct to them; for naturally I could not run, a stranger, from city to city, and go off with the money in my own pocket.

Three days later I got off the train in a snow blizzard in Nebraska—not knowing one living soul—and started the time of my life.

But I can't tell you now, dear, of that glorious Tour, nor even what I managed to tell the men, of talking in Universities, in Senate, in Theatres. Great-hearted Bishop Beecher in his wide hat. Four happy days at Denver. The Grand Cañon with snow and Indians and Bears! Pacifists on the Pacific Coast with more fist than paci. Open-handed people met there too. Real friends made and the fund growing daily. Eagerly I totted up the figures in a little black book with the joy of a miser. Back to the stimulating air of the Sierra Nevada. Three happy days in little Cañon City, speaking to every child in the place, bless 'em. A never-to-be-forgotten afternoon in Grand Rapids and back to New York to make two hundred pounds in one fortnight—there and in South Orange and Philadelphia. Passport difficulties; but permitted to cross with only five

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other women on board, joyfully clutching the cheque.

Yes, a slip of paper then. A Hut to-day. Life is wonderful.

Many funny stories. They caught the points swifty.

Once while telling of how I spoke of the Inward Peace in the theatre at Lincoln, and how the soldiers could keep it even under shot and shell, I wondered if I were putting it a bit too stiff for men who knew what it was, when a sudden loud clap reassured me. A clap from some one who knew.

I ended by calling for a cheer for the generous girls of Ogontz School who had put on the roof.

And they gave it.

Band played again. I held the Lottery.

I told them at night-time not to be unkind to themselves and call themselves hard names, but that they were sons of God and the men their mothers believed them to be and their wives knew them to be. They punctuated it with clapping.

"And we will say together the great prayer."

All stood and took off their hats. The Hut was packed. I finished:

"Now may the Peace that passeth human understanding flow into your hearts and minds this night and keep you and all you love for evermore."

I turned to ask the bandmaster for "God save the King," but Major W. signed for silence and said a few words, calling for a cheer for me. The men gave it and the bandmaster called for a fourth.

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"Now ring through the wind, boys," he said. And they did.

Major W. took me up to supper at the Mess. Miss G. came in to meet me. Lieut. K. was sitting at the table and said:

"Your Talk was perfect. It touched every point the men want to hear."

He told me how they came into the Church Army Huts up the line, tears streaming from their faces, looking like whipped men, and down on their knees. Hymns and Communion all day long.

"Mind you, I don't know that I approve of their waiting till they are in the thick of it, and then forgetting when they come away."

"They never forget," I said. "Though they slip back to convention. And it takes something of the sort for many a man to find the deepest spot that is in himself."

Another officer told me he was glad I saw such a difference in the men who had been at the Top.

"It is good to know," he said, "that we do get something in return for what we go through."

Major W. and Miss G., Captain B. and I walked over the fields in the glorious air to the farm.

Good nights at the gate. Over the yard and into the big house-place, where Madame let us in.

A big door at the foot of the stairs. Miss P. and I crossed a granary and to the cleanest, cosiest rooms, side by side, with glorious big beds. I lay awake nearly all night. Too tired. Woke in the clear

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fine air. Gardens and red roofs and rolling downs about us.

Down to breakfast, where Miss G. was cooking eggs and the daughter making bread, in a big, wooden trough, of the flour that makes the granary smell so good.

We walked through rain, she meeting a cart that could give her a lift and I on to the Hut.

Painters were at work. The roof painted white, walls pale green. The Hut manager, through friends, has procured four handsome stoves, a big billiard table and a beautiful piano.

A kind orderly brought me coffee. Sergeants came in and the bandmaster.

A lorry was going to the railway siding and I went in it, with nineteen soldiers, nearly all returning to New Zealand after three years' service, discharged for ill-health or age.

Some said they would like to have seen it out.

"Many came over from New Zealand"—a jolly old man told me—"saying, 'We've never seen the other side of the world, and we never thought we could. Now we can go at Government expense.'"

"Speak for yourself," another broke in furiously.

"Ah!" he replied, turning towards him most kindly. "You don't see that I'm an old cynic, and you like to take seriously every word that I utter."

Tiger, a black dog, tracings of sheep-dog about him, went too. His collar is marked:

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"New Zealand 1914.
Egypt 1914.
Egypt 1915.
France 1916."

I sat in front with the driver. We were in a London 'bus, painted a dull khaki, that came over within a week of the War. Could tell some tales, too, that 'bus.

It took us into the yard at the railway siding, and I went along a waiting train, chatting to the men.

Some were grumbling at their food.

"Better than what we eat in France," I said. "Horse and a few other things."

"If you haven't got consumption—and you don't look as if you had with them rosy cheeks—you can eat horse and it won't hurt you," a man remarked.

"If I eat horse," I said, "it's the horse that gets consumption."

But in the very next truck a fine, big fellow eating his bully and biscuit remarked:

"There's many a man in this Army has never lived so well in his life. It's good stuff they give us."

In another truck I told the men they had never seen France. I asked if they would let wives and children stay about if their country-side were occupied with soldiers?

"Not much!"

It's one of the soldier's misfortunes that he is followed and pestered and done by the wrong people

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in whatever land he may be. And the strange thing is the worst sort of people seem to be the bravest in sticking it out in dangerous places. Perhaps they are so down and out they don't mind a little more.

They gravely agreed to all this.

"No, we haven't seen France," a Scotsman remarked solemnly. "But we've smelt it."

Later on out on the trucks another grumbler beset our gathering. An ambulance man.

He spoke—as they sometimes do—so personally to me, that I said:

"I didn't make the Belgians and I didn't make the English and I'm not going to be responsible for either of them."

A shout of laughter went up, but he began again at once and wouldn't let them hush him up.

"It was a good bit of repartee," he said. "But it don't answer my questions."

One of the New Zealanders from the Horse Hospital took the floor.

"I've seen this lady three times," he told us. "The first time she came over to our Hut in pouring rain and she drove at her own expense in one of them grumblers, as you call them." He was corrected to "growlers" amidst laughter. "And last night she came over in wind and rain on her bike and gave as fine a talk as man can listen to, and had to put up in a farm-house for she didn't get back that night. And all I say is, thank God there's some one as ull do all that for a set of damned scamps. If she

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wasn't a lady, I'd like to say she's got the guts to do it. She might be in a home of her own this minute, like many another woman over here."

The ambulance man broke in at once to say that the women who came over to France had no home and nowhere else to go—"and expect us to admire 'em, cos they come hanging round us here."

The New Zealander told us of the Fanys and how they had gone to the rescue of the Chinks, the night of the Raid. "Those ladies came out in the night, stayed under the bombing, and lifted the Chinese with their own hands into the ambulances. They ought to have the D.S.O."

Three Fanys have had bad accidents. One was stopped on a railway line—train backed in, smashed up the car and killed a wounded man, and she had to have her leg amputated. Another on the quay—her brakes refused to act. She was alone in the car and it plunged headlong into the dock. She dived right through the stretchers and came up to the surface, but there lost her head and swam away out to sea. A soldier swam after her.

The third backed to the edge of the Canal, where the bank gave way. Luckily the heavy end of the car was beneath her, and she escaped with a sousing.

They live in neat little barracks, pleasantly situated near the sea. They have Army rations, and pay nine francs extra a month for fresh fruit and vegetables. They have no pay, and do all out of patriotism.

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Mrs. W. told me of her night out during a raid. She and Miss M. went out along the road into the country, and the old men from the Labour Camp streamed after them.

"Whether they came to look after us or because we could look after them, I don't know."

They all got into a shed, where they talked so loud, she told them to hush, for they might attract the Boches' attention.

One went out into the field and a piece of dirt, thrown up by a shell—possibly a dud—struck him in the face.

"I wish I were in my comfortable bed at home," he said, while she mopped up blood and dirt. "Kept warm by my old woman."

Bye-bye,

Yours as ever,

N.

SOMEWHERE ELSE IN FRANCE
AND BY THE SEA,

Sept. 22nd.

DEAR,

Looking over the sand-dunes to quiet stretches of sand and white lines of breaking surf. Never does the dream of life dream itself so sweetly as here among the hillocky sand-dunes. Twelve years ago when I was here not a house stood on the lower sands near the sea. Now they are studded

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with little red-tiled jerry-built villas, inhabited by rude people. Very different to our motherly Veuve Delpierre and the courtly old *chef* at the Hôtel de la Marine. Hôtel Delpierre is now Portuguese Head-quarters, and the old *chef* has cooked his last earthly repast.

And how did I get here?

On Thursday took train once more and finally to the Happy Valley.

A sharp scudding shower greeted me at the station, but the sun shone as I ran between the cornfields on the high open road, dipped down the hill, under the arches and found the peaceful little stream once more.

Another hearty welcome.

A delicious dinner at the open door on Army rations—leg of mutton, browned potatoes, snowy bread and pozzy; and I went to my billet to lie down, not before I needed it. Back to a merry little tea. The Padre there.

Changed our frocks; and an immense crowd again rallied for Concert.

I gave my Tour across the States—spoke for twenty-five minutes. Heard again, "We're doing it by degrees," and "I dreamt that I he-hard in Ma-harble Halls," up to "Hex-cel-si-hor, Hex-cel-si-hor."

Next morning walked round to the Hut, packed my bicycle. Final farewells.

On to the road, and up a steep climb, making up

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my mind more and more to come for an easy leisurely bicycle tour "*après la guerre finit!*" Under flickering shadows of tall trees, apples and pears hanging ripe in orchards. Again to open country, and a stiff summer breeze in my face. A fine downhill run to M. and much asking of the way. Nearly missed it, owing to a British officer telling me to follow my front wheel. Luckily, asked a woman in a hooded cart. Then another cart, a Belgian officer on horseback, a French soldier, a woman, and finally a shepherd with a flock of sheep. They all told me to turn to the left.

Undulating open country, wide cornfields, hills rising to the eastern horizon.

Met two Canadians, while dawdling up a hill. Stood and chatted with them.

They were miners and had done the celebrated burrowing under Messines Hill. They pointed to the eastern slopes, saying it was much the same sort of country. The Germans held the ridge, brought up their reinforcements from under its shelter and had the British lying in the wide area beneath them. That was the hill where the earth rose as in waves, under the German general's very feet, and destroyed them.

Speaking of officers and mining. A little gang of miners were working underground and twice sent for the officer to listen to the Boches working on their left. Each time he came and put the instruments to his ears the noise ceased. He declared

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there was nothing, they were men working on top. Went away, and soon after they were all blown up.

"My cousin among them," the Canadian said.

A cart came up drawn by two fine big horses, driven by an English soldier, giving a lift to a French soldier. I asked for one too. The Canadians soon had my bicycle hoisted on the sacks behind. I climbed up between the soldiers, and the strong horses drew us on up the hill.

"They must be Flemish," I remarked of the horses.

"The one to the left may be—folk around here say so—this one comes from America."

But even in America he must have been bred from something Flemish. No native-born horse was that shape—unless they brought a hippopotamus from South America to help the breed.

Up over the hill and along the white road between the stretching cornfields, a blue strip of sea showing above them. The valley beneath on the left, like a map, where the Belgian officer told me to go to avoid the hills.

Up above, the soldier gave me the horses to hold —and they needed some holding—lifted down my bicycle, I bade au revoir to the wounded Frenchman, good-bye and good luck to the Englishman. Mounted my bike and spun down to a sunny little white-painted *estaminet*, where I had a good glass of Quinquina Dubonnet for three sous, and on down to the village,

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the sand-dunes and the little river. Never such air in all the world.

Here the village street and the Hôtel de la Marine, white with green shutters at the corner. I dismounted, went in and asked for the *patron*. Alas, five months before he deceased!

Never again shall I see his white clothes nor eat such *babas*. I said something of the kind to the woman.

"Ah, for the *pâtisserie!*" she said, lifting her shoulders and hands to heaven.

Away to the right on the shaggy bit of moor and sand where, in old days, the men of our party had dropped a few flower-pots in the earth and drove round golf-balls, I found the tents of the Rest Camp and the Church Army Hut—almost empty at the moment. Left a note for Mr. W. and went down the village street to find a billet. Quite a struggle both for bed and for an odious *déjeuner*, abominably dear and rudely served. France! France!

Back to rest, with the glorious air in my lungs and the swish, swish of waves on the sand.

Up and into my white gown, away to the Camp. Still no one in the Hut, and I wandered down among the tents and the officers' quarters, stopping to tell tales to a knot of men, who gathered into some eighty.

The officers' tent, a big marquee, was open all along one side. Sand-dunes and sea and little tables each with its vase of flowers. A pleasant change to the Front they had only left two days ago.

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They gave me a drink of lime-juice cordial and I told them tales of other days in the village.

Mr. W. turned up, and we strolled back to the Hut. I sat for a quiet quarter of an hour in the little chapel. A small end of the narrow platform curtained off by a red curtain, a narrow table and on it a little portable Altar.

Somehow it seemed more suggestive of holiness than many a large and florid masterpiece.

The audience gathered. Tired men, eyes weary with looking on horrid sights, sat before me.

It is good to get them laughing, fill the eyes with other visions; and I did for a merry hour.

The five minutes' serious talk at the end they made most impressive.

I read in Ephesians: "Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children," and backwards, "Be ye kind one to another. Loving, tender-hearted, forgiving one another." And told them they were this.

Told them how I wished I could learn their kindness and take their big-heartedness into my life. Told them that harder than battle courage is the courage of daily life they have mastered, of bearing and forbearing. How out of the seed of love, out of this manly patience grows the fulfilment, "Until ye shall come unto the stature and measure of the fullness of Christ."

A man struck a match in the silence, which was otherwise profound. He asked me when I began if he might smoke, and I replied: "Do just as you like."

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Hand-shakes that are worth all. Out under the quiet stars, leaving them to gather for sing-song.

Mr. W. came with me to the *Marine*, where I had cold meat, bread and butter, little cakes, a glass of Benedictine and he had coffee, and I carried away two blocks of *pain d'épice*, all for two francs.

To bed. Hush-sh—hush-sh of the sea.

Up next morning to begin this letter, on the balcony of the hotel, joined by a delightful boy, officer in charge of Boches prisoners. Half his right hand shot away. He told me how good the prisoners were, and I told him how one of them said that our men were the prisoners—they were the people they had to wait on, for our Government dared not have them treated to anything but the very best. We spoke of their intolerable mentality.

Mr. W. came and we went up to the Hut. Much rushing round to get it photographed.

Found a woman, with the help of the orderly, whose husband, wounded, was in bed. Too ill that day to photograph, but would lend his Kodak.

Found the colonel in the barber's tent. He gave permission.

Went to Monsieur's bedside and took the Kodak with full instructions and his little son to help. Only hope they'll come out all right. Bought a film of ten. They were turned crooked, so eight have been taken. The cooks came in, and a little kiltie boy would not.

Farewells.

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Got on my bicycle and had an arduous tussle against head wind up and down the hills, but mostly up to W. Passed hospital tents. Stood to let twelve ambulance motors pass. Arrived at the station in time to give my bicycle to a soldier and go back into the town for a cup of coffee and cakes. The best pastry-cook I've struck since war-time. Up to the station again.

A handsome French officer was saying good-bye to an old man. An elderly French *infirmière* in the carriage.

I talked to the officer and told him what I had said to the men the previous night. Tears sprang in his beautiful eyes. It is good to look on a tall, lean, manly form in the pale-blue tight-fitting uniform. A man alert and supple. He had the Croix de Guerre, and a cord and gold tassel from shoulder to breast, the last because his regiment twice had been mentioned for deeds of valour. His whole family—twenty-five of them—are away in invaded country. He only has had two official postcards from them since the war began. Not married and his mother dead. At the outbreak of war he knew every man in his battalion by name, and he really knew them. I thought of the sick sapper, who on his bed spoke to me of the high intelligence that shines from a French officer's eyes; the spirit that speaks.

A great rush at Calais to get a cab to take me to B. Camp. I found the old man and the *réformé* horse. Hurried back to the hotel, washed, prepared

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Lottery and got away in the cab an hour later. Found an empty Hut—but the men came pouring in later. I held the Lottery and young E. had the only shirt. A man gave a very good song.

It was my last night with them. Mr. A. got on the form and made a speech—said they called me Little Mamma and I played with the boys in the Hut, but down at the railway siding was a real mother, helping pass the weary hours, feeling for the ladened backs.

Darkness gathered in the Hut.

The men thronged closer and closer, listening intently to the gentle, husky voice, they have to listen hard to hear.

It died into silence.

A curious kind of awkward pause; and then they burst out:

"For she's a jolly good fellow. For she's a jolly good fe-ellow!"

Three glorious cheers.

Hand-clasps all round. Lumps rose in my throat. It seemed like a dream.

Mr. A. and young E. took my arms to the cab.

Tears were pouring down my cheeks.

Outside a lovely evening and the moon up in a clear heaven.

The black Hut stood stark against it.

Dear little Hut! Where shall I spend happier hours?

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A dark knot of men as I drove away. A deep voice calling:

"Good-bye, Mother darling."

The same letter, only a little later.

Yes, it is true. Summer has gone and I must go too.

It was deep, dark night before ever I left B. Camp, and I cannot scamper around on a bicycle in black darkness and deep mud. It would not be fair to others if anything happened.

I asked an Australian if I couldn't manage to bicycle to the Camps in the autumn, and he laughed aloud.

"Why," he said, "it takes a strong man all he can do to walk on his feet through that mud. You and that bicycle——" He looked at us both with a sort of humorous pity.

One evening slipping down the little high scooped bridge, after passing the French Sentry at the Crossing, I must have run over a brick or rock or something. My treddles were swept away from me. One ricochetted on to my instep, tore my stocking and my foot. The bicycle reeled and swayed like a drunken shuttlecock. Luckily I kept my head and my seat. The road was empty, though pitch dark, and quite a way farther on I regained the pedal with my sore foot.

Another night—but this was funny—returning from B. Camp there was the usual swarm of men

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like bees in the deep dusk at the head of the lane leading to the W.A.A.C. Camp.

I dodged and rang; but an absorbed Australian stepped in front of me.

"Here, boy, get out of the way," I screamed. Somehow we brushed each other. "Oh, you nearly had me off!"

Three of them stood in the middle of the road, calling:

"Man, Man! You are but man, not woman. Never will you be woman."

And isn't it wonderful to think I've sat and chatted and hob-nobbed with thousands of soldiers this summer, and every minute been happy? Not one little incident to cross out. They have always taken care of me.

I have three days more, and shall spend all of them at the railway siding.

Can you roll all their love and chivalry and tenderness and humour into one being?

Because that is you, my Dream-Person.

I hold your hand in mine to-night.

Bye-bye,

N.

A.P.O. X.,
Once more Sunday night.

BIG LISTENING THING,

What a mercy I have you. Dream-People are the best. They are not there when you don't

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want them, and they always come to you when you do.

Nearly didn't have enough breakfast.

You know I make my own, because they only gave me a small cup of cold coffee, a scrap of bread and rancid butter for two francs. So I have a dear little saucepan. Jean buys me methylated spirits in a big bottle. Twopennyworth of bread lasts me three mornings. A pot of blackberry jam—there's pozzy for you. And sometimes I have fruit.

I had bought butter. Real butter, like we had in Normandy before the War. There was a little old bit of bread and some bits of ration biscuits and scrapings from two old tins of cocoa.

A lovely day.

Took tram to the little lane by the *estaminet* behind the tracks. A Red Cross train blocked the lines. Two ambulance-orderlies pulled me up into the carriage and let me down the other side. The bunks lie along the windows and the wounded can look out if they are well enough.

When they are passing, the men look at them and can tell if they are gassed or wounded.

On the other side I found the reinforcement train already packed. Went along the trucks.

"Are ye out on an excursion?" a boy asked.

"Yes," I said. "A lovely four months' excursion to play with the soldiers in France."

"Come and play here, Ma," they called from the next truck.

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Into the dear little Hut and had a good lunch with Mrs. W. at eleven o'clock.

Out again. Glorious day. Wore my blue muslin and, of course, the little white parasol.

Found rather a wild set of men, lying about under the shade of a train. They offered me a pack to sit on. They began at once bitterly about the Red-caps; but before they could tell me much they had a row with a man who must have said something rude to me.

Happily I never heard him. He was a grumbler, and a little drunk, and seeing he wanted to take the floor I said pleasantly:

"Well, this is my crowd. If you want to hold a meeting, get your own crowd farther down on the track."

He was behind me and I had forgotten him, when three nice-looking men suddenly reared themselves from reclining positions and went for him.

"You go right down to the end of the track," one said with pointing arm. "Like the lady said. You go at once, or we'll do for you."

He went.

"We may be a fierce lot," the speaker continued, settling again on his pack. "But we'll not have a lady insulted. You are all right here, Mamma, with us, and we are shut on him."

Some of the story of the scrap they poured out to me, and some of it I had from Mrs. W. who learnt it

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from our Red-caps. But I don't quite untangle it from a muddle yet.

It began at E. with a Red-cap speaking to an Australian and a khaki girl. They went for the Red-caps to such an extent that the Jocks were called out to assist them; but as soon as they found what was going on they changed sides and charged the Red-caps, and they were all driven out of the town.

"First regiment in the British Army, the Red-caps!" men sitting round me said. "And so many casualties amongst them." But if rumour speaks true there were casualties among them that night.

Our Red-caps were stirred and excited at these men coming down amongst them.

One of them was telling Mrs. W. about it and how the police had orders not to wear their red cap covers for two days. Looking out of the window to point out the malefactors he exclaimed:

"Why, there they are, and Little Mamma sitting in the midst of them."

Yes, and Little Mamma had a very happy time sitting in the midst of them; and One Other came into the midst before we parted. For they bowed their heads and retreated into the Still Place in their breasts, and sought and found the Inward Comfort before they grasped my hand in parting.

Talking of malefactors, I often tell them in the field that I do want to meet a burglar. Not just a pickpocket, but a real professional burglar. I want

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to hear from him how he trembles when the old man snores. I know all about how people are frightened of burglars; but I should like to hear from burglars how they are frightened of people.

No luck.

"Here, George, haven't ye got a jemmy in your pocket? You might oblige the lady."

It has drawn a few funny stories about apple-stealing and suchlike misdemeanours, but the burglar is not forthcoming.

Evening settles with a certain amount of peace upon the little Hut.

Trains have mostly gone for the day.

A few young officers may be lingering, drinking tea from the bowls they are supposed to wash, but generally don't.

Mrs. W. goes off to her hot bath and soup in her private home.

Two of the girls are tidying up and chaff goes on amongst a few old habitués. And the colonel of B. Camp comes and gardens amongst the flowering stocks and the little Chinese trees. Gardening spells home to him, and brings him nearer the waiting wife in Blighty and his three little girls.

I accepted soup and a little meal from Mrs. W. before returning to town and again to Belgian Concert.

Only Cinema going on. Bored me. I left.

Had just finished dinner and was paying at the desk when lights went out and sirens began.

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I groped along the little, dark, narrow street, found the edge of the tiny pavement under the old Gateway. A fine moon illumined the wider places.

Went on to the hotel and found some going down to the cellars, others standing at the door. We heard distant bombs explode.

Captain K. asked me to walk across to the signals with him. We went. No news. D. being bombed. We strolled on to the bridge where one has a wide outlook.

He is looking after German prisoners. He got some concessions for them and told them in fun he ought to have an Iron Cross.

Next day in all seriousness they brought him one. Isn't that like them?

Went to bed and to sleep. Must get my sleep with all I'm doing, and if it's the Last—well, may it be tranquil.

Monday.

The railway siding. A very slack and peaceful morning. Few men. Sat a good bit in the Cottage. Met a fine young doctor. He was writing at the corner writing-table, but got into a basket-chair and asked for a chat.

He agreed with me that the Public School System has been overdone. Taking little boys from the most educating thing in the world, the toil and fret of family life, keeping them apart like little monks, confined to their own age and sex until they are formed men, when they wander ignorant and egotistic,

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blind to the little things that make life. Spoiled and idolized by the women.

"Yes," he said. "The women may spoil and flatter us, but mark you, it's up to them to make the family life; and no one can rear children at home without having rules and conforming to them in the house. That is one of the reasons why children are packed off to school."

"One reason perhaps. But there are hundreds of women who could keep a sane, sober home, yet deliberately deprive themselves of their sons, because England has gone mad on the idea that a man can't be a man except alone with men—or boys. It is the exact opposite to truth. A man can't be a man except in his relation to a woman. A little cow-boy said to me in the Rocky Mountains: 'A man's got to be good to a woman if she's old or ugly or young or beautiful; for it is his one chance to be a man!'"

One of the finest men I have met out here will go only half, all his days. He is clean, he is gentle, he is great. But his life is absolutely womanless. If he marries, it will only be a poor sort of a job. She may interest herself completely in him, as English-women often, and unselfishly do.

But why be unselfish with your own other half?

I never will be with you—and you never need be with me.

My very own comprehending Dream-Person,

Yours completely,

N.

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JUST ANOTHER LETTER.

DEAR,

And I left off without telling you what did happen. I never said good-bye to the doctor; for I suddenly came out of the discussion to find the Hut and the siding alive with men. And I arose and flew over the track to them.

A fine bunch of flying men. One said he hoped I wouldn't haunt him.

"You should be delighted if I did," I replied.

"But think of the responsibility if you come after me into the wet trenches."

"Responsibility for you!" I said. "But perfectly dreadful for me."

It raised a roar of laughter. I can see the little Jock, who had run up with twenty others, laughing now.

Next minute we were all talking seriously of the W.A.A.C girls.

"They had better come over here to get husbands," a man said. "They can't get them in England now."

My flying friend said, and even more distinctly can I see his grave face lifted as he sat at the edge of a truck with his legs hanging down:

"Lead us not into temptation."

I went to see Mrs. K. in command of the W.A.A.C. girls that afternoon. She was out; but I found their local commandant. A jolly, womanly woman full of

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confidence in the situation. She took me over to see the big Y.W.C.A. Hut going up for them.

Coming away I found the men gathering to meet them and said to three corporals:

"These little girls want some fine, nice men like you to look after them."

"And we want some fine, nice girls," one answered promptly, "to look after us poor fellows."

Chummie is better. I bent over the wooden work of his cot, and he said in his grave, deep voice:

"I am having most beautiful sleeps."

It was their doctor who called him Chummie. They say he is such a fine fellow. They want me to meet him; but I am a little afraid of Military Authorities. He might say:

"Where is your permit?"

And, bless you, dear, I haven't any.

Really the evening was too amusing. Came back after dinner by moonlight and siren hooting.

Another raid.

Went into the hotel to find young officers down from the Front with nothing but *hors-d'œuvre* before them.

All the servants were in the cellar.

"And what in the world is this potty little raid?" they asked. "Nothing at all compared to what is going on at the Front. What's the matter with the cook? Why can't he go on with his job? He's been chatting at the front door."

"Matter with the cook?" I said. "He's only

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doing what you and I would do if we had the beastly hot job of standing in front of a fire. He's getting away when he has a good legitimate chance to go."

If they only could have wine they could make something of a meal.

I pursued Madame to the *cave*. She was sitting there like a queen, surrounded by her "personnel."

I asked for wine.

"But it is locked in the cellar, and the key is upstairs and every one is afraid."

"But, madame, I am not afraid. I will fetch your key and the wine."

She sprang up, ran upstairs, unlocked a cupboard door, produced the wine. Gave a bottle to each table, booked it to each account and was on her way downstairs when she met in the gloom—rendered visible by a few candles—an officer carrying cups of coffee from the kitchen.

"But what is this?" she cried.

"Plenty of hot coffee in the kitchen," he remarked to every one. "If we fetch it ourselves."

A stream to the kitchen began. Her fright forgotten, Madame sat at the receipt of custom and booked it busily to each of them.

We chatted and told stories, and they ate what they could in the dusk.

They also stole a crust of bread for me, because I had forgotten to buy one for my breakfast. And when they had eaten all they could they got up to go, but Madame stopped them at the door and

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demanded fabulous prices for what they had not devoured.

Madame discussed it in bad English.

"The personnel is alarmed," she said. "But you have eaten the food."

Suddenly the discoverer of the coffee burst forth in fluent French.

"But I have been your personnel," he remarked. "Instead of abusing me you should pay me for my services."

It ended with compromises—probably to her advantage—but I was sneaking upstairs with my stolen crust.

I will confess it. I left these brave and gallant soldiers to their fate. Madame has always been too much for me.

But I have lifted a crust off her.

I hope you slept as well as I did.

But there are nights when voices call me till I wake. Voices of my big Children away up there in that worse than hell.

"Mamma!" they yell. "Mummy," with a whimper in the middle. "Mother! Mother!" Concentrated agony in the word.

And they are calling. For if a man in agony does not call on God, he calls upon his mother. All the dear little names they shower in play on me.

And I start up in bed. Draw up my knees and, with my hands round them, know that the deathlessness in them is safe.

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I close my eyes and feel life eternal and internal in them here and now. Greater and bigger than this awful Phantasmagoria through which we are passing.

Both are true. But one is everlasting.

You are coming through, my brave, beautiful boys —you are coming through.

Your cry of agony is heard and answered. Some great Mother God gleans you—else every mother's heart-leap to her little one in this world is nothing but a lie.

Love *is*.

Principles, Laws, Spirit can't break.

Yes, they may answer, but what we want is a hot cup of tea and a quiet fireside.

Children, Children, it is all right. Mother's voice is for ever calling: "Tea's ready!"

Come and be glad.

It's the little, little things that are Eternal. When shall we learn it?

Bye-bye, my priceless one. Perhaps you have.

Yours,

N.

Tuesday.

Quite an exciting day.

DEAR,

Had lunch in the little restaurant, do you remember, where the cat and dog were so loving? It's in bounds again now.

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Had an excellent little steak, hot *mousseline* potatoes, a glass of beer, and paid two francs fifty.

The big dog kept barking, as I ran out to see what was happening. Siren had sounded. Guns were going. Children were running up to the open space by the bridge and pointing into the blue sky and the tiny cotton-wool flecks of gun-smoke.

A little aeroplane was dodging and circling among them. Faintly we could hear the double action of the buzzing German engine.

Every one thought it was exactly above them.

I thought it over me until a French soldier called out to an old man in a cart:

"Eh, bien, Père X. It is just above your cart. Be careful of your horse!"

Then I knew it was some fifteen yards off me.

Bicycling along after lunch a man on the road called:

"But why then are you here, instead of under cover?"

I yelled back to him:

"And why then are you here, instead of under cover?"

Away over the fields at my left a British aeroplane went buzzing up into the sky. But the German did not wait.

Round by the fortifications, over the railway lines, up the road and over the path through the kitchen garden to the back way into the little Hut by the siding.

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I ring my bicycle bell, instead of hitting the gong by the sentry's post, to come through the gate in the barbed wire, guarding the prisoners.

The gong is a large piece of suspended metal, and by it, hanging from a string, a huge iron nail, a foot and a half long, both of them rusty and picturesque.

"Have you not put the dear little German prisoners safely under cover?" I asked the sentry as he came up. He grinned appreciatively.

Mrs. W.'s Frenchwomen had all been weeping.

These lace-makers of other days, whom she is saving from starvation by giving them jobs in the kitchen, have such thin lives, they have to make the most of any excitement. Besides the aeroplane had been hovering exactly over them—probably taking photographs.

Picking my way over the railway lines, a soldier, slightly boozed, offered me his hand.

I took it.

He worked it slowly up and down.

"Some lady's poor lost child," he said gravely.

Mrs. W. wept with laughter when I told her. I am afraid it is not going to be forgotten.

I took on both officers and men under a waiting train on the tracks. Coming up I found on the edge of them some of the Army Service Corps.

"Ally Sloper's Cavalry," I remarked.

"They call us something besides that," a man said gravely.

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"What's that?"

"Angels and saints of Christ."

"And angels and saints of Christ you are," I cried, taking his hand. "I know you men and your goodness to each other. Your patience and forbearance."

It was an odd little crowd. Rather difficult. The officers put down their heads and laughed softly—generally when the men didn't.

An old sergeant enlivened us. He talked of his missus, said she took the poker to him.

He had been in China.

"And did you take the missus and the poker there?" I asked.

He had not.

"I expect she's an old soldier," I said. "Like yourself."

He replied very proudly that she was, every bit of her.

"All sergeants and officers," I said, when rising to go an hour later. "Too much class about you to be quite my class. A New Zealander on this track said I was amongst damned scamps. That's what I like."

"I was one myself," the sergeant said sadly. "But the Army reformed me."

Miles of train both ways between me and the Hut. I said to Australians:

"Can you kangaroos help me through these cattle-trucks?"

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And they did.

"Be careful with her now, getting down the other side," a man called.

And he was careful.

Found a big crowd had come to the field. The Boches were making an awful noise, but it soon ceased, and we got away with story telling. We talked Republics, and the French on the outbreak of War, and the feeling a man has inside him that he is bigger than the circumstances that surround him.

One told rather a strong story.

"Here's family details for a spinster," I remarked.

They all apologized and said I didn't look like one, and anyhow why was I one?

"Boys," I said, "I will tell you the truth. Falling in love has been one of the pleasures of my long life. But how do you keep it up?"

They laughed uproariously. Each man writhed with delight at his own experience.

They told me of the man who asked:

"Are you the East Yorkshire Riding?"

"No, we're the West Lancashire Walking."

Several times got up to go, but they wouldn't let me.

Must have stayed some hours.

"Boys, I really must go."

"No, don't go, Mummie. Oh, stay a bit, Ma."

"Fall in!"

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And we all got up together.

I saw them off. Usual scenes. Lots of boys on the roof and hanging on to the coupling.

In vain I scream:

"You naughty boys! Come down. Don't you know there's not room to protrude from French trains? The tunnels are too narrow."

And I tell the dreadful story of the small boy whose head was cut off by the tunnel, without making the smallest impression.

"We'll get to Blighty, Ma."

"You may get more blight than you want. I bend over beds in Hospital and say: 'Were you wounded at Mons?' 'Was it on the Somme you've been hurt?' 'No, ma'am, fell off the train.'"

At this they roar with laughter, and another boy, or a man old enough to know better, crawls through the wheels and gazes up at me as he straightens.

"You wicked boy!" I shout. "Don't you know you might be killed?"

"Well, I heard 'em laughing."

"Hit 'em off the roof with your parasol, Ma!"

"My parasol," I say, lifting its light fabric, "wasn't created to knock naughty boys."

"Take a bundhook at 'em, Ma! Here's mine."

"But I can't reach! Come down, you naughty boys. Or else lie perfectly flat when you come to the tunnel." Turning to the open trucks: "And that little one. He is very young and small." He

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grins at me as I pat his knee. "You will take care of him, won't you?"

"Yes, Ma, we're taking care of him."

"And mind you change your socks, boys, when they're wet."

"Shall we change 'em to go and stand up to our arm-pits in water?"

"No, keep on your wet ones then, boys, and be sure you have a dry pair to put on as soon as ever you come out. Change your feet, laddies, as the Scots folk say."

"Wish I could change mine when they're swelled double their size."

They invite me to come too.

"There's room for you, Ma. Come along! We want you badly up the Top. Why don't you come?"

"I've tried my best, boys. Three generals and a bishop talked about it. But they won't let me. Think me too priceless to be gassed."

"Wish they thought me too priceless to be gassed!"

"Bless you, boys! Be good to yourselves. Bye-bye!"

The train moves.

Hands, arms, and heads are all hanging out. They catch leaflets from me as they pass, and when they are finished lean out to touch my hand.

"Only touch!" I shout. For if they take it, they nearly pull me over with the running train.

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"Bye-bye, boys! Bye-bye."

And another raid in the evening. But I expect you are getting as tired of them as we are.

Anyhow I went to sleep.

Nightie-night!

Ever yours,
NELL.

My last day—Alas!

DEAR,

Packed till Mr. A. came from B. Camp. He asked me to get a letter printed in *The Manchester Guardian*. He is a Manchester man, and it is the Rest Camp for the Manchester Regiment.

I promised to write to his wife and tell of his fine work. She wants him home; but he cannot leave the work he does so perfectly.

Often I shall see with memory's eyes the high look on the white face as the little man steps among the great fellows. And the atmosphere he brings with him, charged not only with the gentlemanliness that goes straight to each man and lifts him, but the very Light itself that is the Emanating Force of all goodness in this world.

The young boss came to lunch. We had it quickly at the little restaurant; and I got on my bicycle and went away to the railway siding.

Went to the A.S.C.'s in the far yard. Gentlemanly set of men.

Met the train from the Front.

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The first portion came in and stayed only a minute. Boys in an open truck waved and called to me with all their might.

"Mamma! Mamma!" they shouted. "We've got a burglar. Look at the burglar! We've found a burglar for you."

I ran as hard as I could.

He bowed to me beautifully, the burglar, from the door of the open cattle-truck—but the train bore him away.

We could only wave to each other.

Got among the Jocks, straight down from the last push. Chaffed them about the black-silk tights on their legs. Mud.

The German pill-boxes go over before them like Beecham's, they told me. And why didn't Beach Thomas say what they were doing? Would I please ask him this? And what newspaper was I on anyway?

And why do they print a few Raid Casualties in huge letters, if they happened in London, and what they were doing in small type?

Yes, they had been sent over to hold back the enemy and be slaughtered in thousands to keep those others safe at home, and what did they care as soon as they were gone?

"What's an air raid anyway? Let them come here and know what we're up against."

Yes, they could give me some stuff to give them at home. "When the booze is up to here in a mon."

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With a scoop across the face, I copied. "No, that's too high, Ma. Up to here, not up to there, else he'd drown. We stand in the slushy mud up to our armpits and never notice the dead walking all around us. And ye call 'Wha's that a-kickin of me in the rear? Gie over, Jock. I can kick mesel.' And it's no Jock kickin' ye, but the dirt in your kilt saggin' again the back of yer knees. And ye smite yer iron hat down, so as no to hit yer head agin the wooden beams o' the dug-out, and they throw iron foundries at ye, and ye dodge them like tennis balls. Ay, we'll be fine hands at the tennis when we return, if ever we do! There's a War-r-r going on! An aw-foo War-r-r-r. Some folks don't seem to know it. Go back and tell them it's an AW-FOO WAR-R-R-R-R.'"

Line by line with dramatic action I declaimed it after them.

Ay, that's the stuff to gie 'em! That's the stuff.

They were Gordon Highlanders, Argyll and Sutherlands. They did not know where they were going.

Suddenly the train moved.

"The train's off, boys!" I shouted. "Jump on! Jump on!"

All of them flew. Torn kilties scrambling. No time for farewells. Only one big fellow took my hand and said solemnly:

"Good-bye, be good."

"Bye-bye, boys! Change your socks when they're wet, boys. Be good to yourselves. Get off the roof,

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you naughty boy. Bye-bye. Here, you! Be careful. Bye-bye. Scotland for Ever-r-r. Bye-bye."

They were gone. My last boys.

Back to a hot meal with Mrs. W. Left my trusty little steel steed. Sad to bid it good-bye. Walked to the train.

Saw the big policeman at the crossing.

He wished me "Good luck and a speedy return."

Chatted to French soldiers.

The tram never came. I walked to meet two Australians and a very big Tommy.

"There's no tram this evening, Mamma," the big man said. So I walked all the way to the Music Shop, an A.S.C. with me.

Here I arranged that the phonograph from Denver should be mended. It has been broken *en route;* but the men in the Hospital Camp expect it and know its own little tragic history. It belonged to a young girl, given her by her fiancé, but she died. And her aunt, who mothered her, gave it to the soldiers. She heard me speak in their Y.W.C.A.

The man in the shop said it was a beautiful instrument, worth at least a thousand francs.

Called on Mrs. P., the American Consul's wife.

She told me that women on the way to the cellars under the theatre in the last raid just escaped a shower of shrapnel.

One was called back by a Chasseur Alpin, crying: "Don't leave me here to die alone." He had both legs blown off. She sat on the pavement, his head

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on her lap, till an ambulance came, and reached the theatre weeping, covered with blood.

Went to the Sauvage for dinner—thanked the calm little sweet Madame there for many a kindness. Never a word of complaint, however late I came. Something taken off the bill if I had not full fare. Always gentle words and kind looks.

Jean came to the rescue next morning, found a porter for my luggage. Mrs. P. and young V. came to see me off at the station. Rare old scrimmage as usual.

It is so odd being French one moment, screaming and gesticulating more than anybody, and dropping into British bored nonchalance the next, just according to whom I'm addressing.

The train's off.

Two very tired French officers. Shan't talk to them.

Lean out to look for the last time at the railway siding.

Away over the fields, there's the high windmill, the arms swinging, and I know the Horse Hospital is beneath it on the far side.

France, I am leaving you! But have a scheme to return with Christmas Fairings for lonely Huts.

Past the quarries and the German prisoners.

A swift vista of the Happy Valley, blue under a passing cloud.

There are the hills I climbed in the high cart. The hospital tents and the road to the station.

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In to Boulogne, where a trim soldierly old porter took charge of me.

Others called out he was too old.

"Old?" I cried. "Pas de tout; c'est un embusqué!" *

He was delighted.

A horrid South-Eastern station lunch on the quay.

Bonar Law arrived in a bustling little iron-grey boat, a big, business-looking gun sticking out in front.

He landed, looking modest and unassuming. Red Tabs fussed around him.

An ironclad moved out slowly, armed with machine-guns, torpedoes, air-guns, and a monkey skipping inside one of the boats. Three dogs walked round the torpedo enclosure.

A sergeant pointed them out to me, or I would surely have missed the monkey.

Saw the ambulances arrive alongside a steam-packet. Stretchers and patients were carried aboard.

A smart Canadian nurse, a lieutenant's buttons on her shoulders, stood and watched.

I held my parasol over a man's head as he lay on a stretcher and asked if he were as pleased to be going back that way as they all said they would be?

"Every bit of it, ma'am," he said, grinning.

* Ambushed. *I.e.* Hiding from military service.

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And they grinned yet more on the deck when I called down to them:

"Hi tiddli-itey,
Are you off to Blighty?"

On board and away.

No ironclads with us this time.

The white water hissed behind us. The receding town stood up sharp and clear in the evening sky.

Down to the men on the deck below.

As I passed among them a deep voice called:

"Hallo, Mamma!"

"Who knows me?"

I turned to find a white-haired fireman, going home on leave.

His daughter, eighteen years of age, had been paralysed by fright in a raid.

Sat on a pack and told stories. Speaking of Pacifists, I said:

"They make me sick."

"Oh, don't say sick, or I shall be!"

Time flew. They said I prevented them suffering.

Airmen called me over for a little talk with them.

The cotton-woolly coast rose up before us.

Civilians had to go through the smoking-room and show their passports.

We lost the first train with this delay, and got in the second.

The siren blew. All lights went out.

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SOME SOLDIERS AND LITTLE MAMMA

We are in a darkened carriage with open windows on to moonlit fields.

Pale moon, woolly edges to the trees. Low, white lying mists. My happy summer is over.

Blighty! Blighty! I wish I loved you as the soldiers do.

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